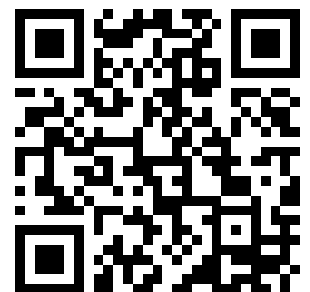

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THE RIFLE CORPS
1800-1808



THE RIFLE REGIMENT
1808-1816



HISTORY & CAMPAIGNS
OF
THE RIFLE BRIGADE

PART I., 1800-1809

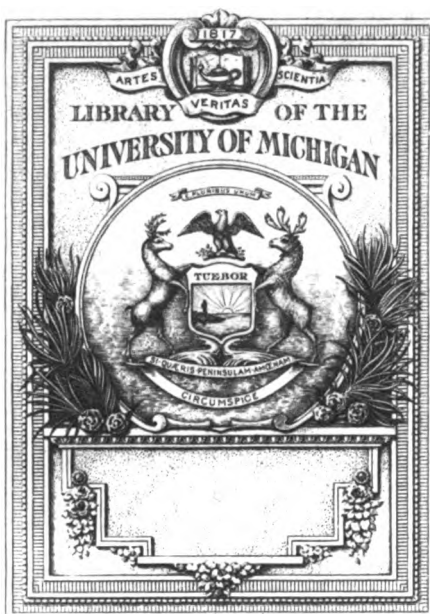
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HISTORY & CAMPAIGNS OF THE RIFLE BRIGADE

COLONEL ^{William} WILLOUGHBY ^{Cole} VERNER

(LATE RIFLE BRIGADE)

Author of "The Military Life of H.R.H. George, Duke of Cambridge," &c.

PART I.

1800—1809



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DEDICATED
TO
FIELD-MARSHAL
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT AND STRATHEARN

COLONEL-IN-CHIEF
OF
THE RIFLE BRIGADE

BY
HIS MOST OBEDIENT AND HUMBLE SERVANT

Willoughby Verner

3-9-36. MR J.

Liln
Thorp
12-19-28
1800
2vrl.

PREFACE.

THE history of a Regiment, like the history of a family, is usually of interest only to the few who belong to or are closely connected with it. Whether or not it concerns a wider circle depends on the time the Regiment or family has existed and the part it has played in history.

The Regiment now known as the Rifle Brigade was raised in 1800 and first made its name as "The Rifle Corps" under Lord Nelson in the following year at the Battle of Copenhagen. In 1803 it was numbered the 95th and subsequently fought throughout the Peninsular War and at Waterloo as "The 95th" or "The Rifle Regiment." It was not until after Waterloo that it was taken out of the numbered Regiments of the Line and styled "The Rifle Brigade." Of course the Rifle Brigade entered comparatively late on the stage of our military history and older regiments had already won their spurs during the wars of the 18th century. But at least it may be claimed that it was a junior regiment, the 95th Rifles, which first demonstrated the power of the British rifle and thus marked out an entirely new departure in the history of our Army. Hence the story of the inception and rise of the Rifle Corps now styled the Rifle Brigade apart from minor matters of purely regimental interest contains much which must strike not only every student of war but all those who are attracted by the evolution of the weapons and tactics whereby the gentle art of man-slaying is perfected.

It is possible some may imagine that I am falling into the common error of claiming more than I can prove. At any rate I can say safely that no statement appears in this book which is not verified from original papers and books. I fully admit that a combination of circumstances made the conditions under which the Regiment was raised very special. Thus it had exceptionally good men in Coote Manningham and William Stewart to

organize and train it and to introduce a regimental system which has since with few modifications been almost universally accepted throughout our service. Further it had exceptional opportunities of learning its work in brigade at Shorncliffe with such distinguished corps as the 43rd and 52nd Light Infantry under so superb a master of war as Sir John Moore. But the crowning good fortune was that besides taking part in many minor campaigns and expeditions the Regiment served throughout the Peninsular War and fought hard at Waterloo.

It has been said that history is the essence of innumerable biographies; and this certainly applies to the story of the Rifle Brigade. For from the earliest days of the Regiment as the "Experimental Corps of Rifle Men" raised by Colonel Coote Manningham in 1800 the number of diaries and personal recollections dealing with the Regiment itself and with the experiences of those who served in it is most remarkable. This is undoubtedly attributable to the novel and peculiar duties of the Regiment at that period.

Thus, in the very year that the Corps was raised their founder issued the "Regulations for the Rifle Corps formed at Blatchington Barracks" followed a few years later by "Military Lectures delivered to the Officers of the 95th Rifle Regiment at Shorncliffe Barracks Kent, in the spring of 1803." From these two books alone it is possible to follow out much of the early history of the Regiment, its system and methods, its rules and customs; many of which have endured to this day.

Colonel Jonathan Leach, who served in the Regiment from 1806 to 1821, wrote a "Sketch of the Field Services of the Rifle Brigade from its formation to the Battle of Waterloo" as well as a second book entitled "Rough Sketches from the Life of an Old Soldier."

Quarter-master Surtees, who served from 1802 to 1827, wrote "Twenty-five Years in the Rifle Brigade" and Sir John Kincaid who served from 1809 to 1831 wrote two of the most delightful military books ever published, "Adventures in the Rifle Brigade" and "Random Shots from a Rifleman" which have been read by thousands of the general public. The "Recollections of Rifleman Harris" (1800-10) give useful details about Coruña and Walcheren and the "Adventures of a Soldier" by Edward Costello (1809-30) are equally valuable.

These books together with the Mr. Stooks Smith's "Alphabetical List

of Officers of the Rifle Brigade from 1800 to 1850" were all at the disposal of Sir William Cope when he published his History of the Regiment in 1876. Sir William joined the army in 1833 only 18 years after Waterloo and hence served with many of those who had fought there and in the Peninsula. In his preface he mentions many of these as well as others who had served in the early Cape Wars, in the Crimea and in the Indian Mutiny, men whom he had numbered among his intimate personal friends and from whom he obtained much valuable information.

Needless to say, it is my intention to take every possible advantage of the knowledge which Sir William Cope thus got at first hand from the men who had been eye-witnesses of the famous events he so well described. I had the honour and pleasure to know Sir William Cope in 1873, before I was gazetted to the Regiment and our friendship continued until his death in 1892.

In 1889 I wrote some articles on the raising of Riflemen in our Army and it was Sir William Cope, who, recognizing that I had recorded sundry facts which he had not dealt with in his History, suggested that these articles should be republished in book form. The upshot was my small book entitled "The First British Rifle Corps" published in 1890 and dedicated to my kind old friend. It was subsequent to the publication of this book that the idea of starting "The Rifle Brigade Chronicle" arose and that its editorship and general management was entrusted to me by the Regiment. The first volume of the "Chronicle" was published in 1891 and it has been issued annually ever since. In these volumes a great deal of regimental information, which was not accessible in 1876 when Sir William brought out his History, has from time to time been chronicled.

Also in the last few years a number of new books have appeared which are full of the doings of the Rifles up to the Battle of Waterloo. Pre-eminent among them is the Autobiography of Sir Harry Smith who was in the Regiment from 1805 to 1826 and served with it at Monte Video, throughout the Peninsular War and at Waterloo. This book only appeared in 1904. Another important book published in 1903 is the "Life of John Colborne, F.M. Lord Seaton" who commanded the 52nd at Waterloo. In 1899 I brought out the Journals and Letters of Major George Simmons, who served in the Regiment from 1809 to 1838, under the title of "A British

Rifle Man." Simmons was a quaint and delightful character and his letters are full of original remarks.

Captain Andrews' (1809-25) MS. Journal of the New Orleans Campaign contains much of interest. This did not come into Sir William Cope's possession until after he had brought out his History.

Among the old unpublished journals kept by officers in the early part of the last century I must particularly name those of the following as containing many interesting details: General Sir A. Cameron, Major-General John Cox, K.H., Major-General William Cox, K.H., and Colonel Jonathan Leach. All of these, as well as others, have been kindly placed at my disposal by relatives. Some were excellent letter writers and much information has been gathered from the letters of Sir Andrew Barnard, Sir Thomas Sidney Beckwith, Sir Harry Smith, Sir Charles Napier, and Sir John Kincaid. Some of these were written to post up in matters of regimental interest an officer left behind wounded at some station in France or Spain and have reached me from sources innumerable and hence cannot be acknowledged here as I would wish.

It is impossible to recapitulate the roll of gallant soldiers who have left written records of their share and experience of the Napoleonic Wars; and, in doing so, shed light on the deeds of the Rifles. Fortunate indeed is the Regiment and still more fortunate the historian who has at hand such copious sources of information. I cannot adequately thank a tithe of those who have in one way or another assisted me, for the reason that during the twenty-five years I have been collecting information I have unfortunately not always kept records of how and when I obtained it.

I must particularly name the Hon. John Fortescue whose splendid "History of the British Army" has been invaluable to me in innumerable ways. I have, as will be seen, quoted from him largely with regard to the evolution and early history of the rifle and riflemen, for I feel that in so doing I am guided by knowledge and sound judgment of one who is absolutely impartial in his views and opinions and who is influenced by only one motive, that of ascertaining and chronicling the truth about our Army. Further, I have repeatedly obtained much information from his maps which are as excellent as the rest of his work, when drawing my own.

Preface

ix.

I am also greatly indebted to Mr. Oman for the care and skill with which in his "History of the Peninsular War" he has worked out the numbers engaged and the casualties incurred during that period. In this and in other ways his history has been of great assistance to me.

Colonel Gerald Boyle's " Rifle Brigade Century," published in 1909, in which he brought Mr. Stooks Smith's earlier work up to date, has been of great use to me upon many occasions.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to let every man tell his own story, since I am very sure that is the way the story will be told best.

With regard to the vexed question of spelling proper names of individuals and of places, I have tried to obtain the most correct version. It must be remembered that a century ago even our famous Generals, such as Craufurd, rarely had their name spelt right even in the *London Gazette*; whilst the names of many of the victories worn on the Colours and Appointments of the British Army, are equally incorrectly spelt even to this day.

*Hartford Bridge,
Winchfield, Hants,
November, 1912.*

WILLOUGHBY VERNER.

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CHAPTER I.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE RIFLE CORPS.

The development of fire-action in the British Army—The match-lock in the Cromwellian wars—The flint-lock or "fire-lock" of Marlborough's campaigns—Formations and ranges at Fontenoy, 1745—The capabilities of the British musket, "Brown Bess"—Rifled arms first used in Europe, 1631—Bavarian riflemen, 1645—Prussian marksmen—French rifled carbines, 1674—Austrian light troops and Tyrolese riflemen: their effect on Frederick the Great's attack at Kolin, 1757—Our struggle in Canada with the French—Braddock's defeat in 1755—Light Infantry tactics and rifle fire of our enemies—Amherst's extemporized Light Infantry. Skirmishers and Light Infantry at Quebec, 1759—Rifled carbines issued to British troops in 1758—The lessons of the Seven Years' War—The revolt of the American colonies, 1775—Light troops and rifle fire: Analogy to the Boer War, 1899—Deadly effect of rifle fire at Bunker's Hill—British corps of marksmen formed—Major Patrick Ferguson—Ferguson's breech-loading rifle, 1776—Ferguson's corps of British riflemen: its services at Brandywine, 1777—The disaster at King's Mountain, 1780—Death of Ferguson—Effect of War of Independence on Light Infantry tactics—The evolution of modern tactics—Mesnil-Durand's system, 1774: its adoption into French Army, 1785—"Napoleon's tactics"—*Voltigeurs* and *Corps légers*—First British Regiment of Light Infantry, 1760—Continental models—Foreign Light Infantry and Foreign Riflemen in British pay, 1793-1803—Raising of the 5th Battalion, 60th—Fortescue's summary of the development of Light Infantry tactics and the employment of Riflemen, 1793-1802.

LESS than three centuries ago the decision of battle lay still with old world tactics and weapons; and the bulk of the infantry were armed with pikes. It was the famous Swedish war captain, Gustavus Adolphus, who about 1625 first realized that the whole future of modern war lay in the development of musketry fire. The weapon at this

History of the Rifle Brigade

time was the match-lock and despite the invention of the flint-lock musket or "fire-lock," this cumbrous arm continued to be used for nigh a century later.

The advantages of the flint-lock were, however, appreciated during the Cromwellian wars and in 1660 when Monk's army was marching on London, the Commander "ordered the Coldstreamers to return their match-locks into store and to draw fire-locks in their stead."¹ However, it was not until 1663 that the Guards were armed exclusively with fire-locks. Pikemen, who had been gradually employed less and less, had virtually become obsolete in 1649 and were finally abolished in 1704 and the flint-lock musket and socket-bayonet became the recognized arms of our infantry. An improved pattern musket was issued during the reign of Queen Anne which fired sixteen bullets to the pound—that "ounce of lead" which became the traditional missile of British infantry and was used with such effect all the world over for many years.

During Marlborough's wars the musket of our opponents carried bullets of only twenty-four to the pound. In 1783 the British musket had a calibre of .550 in. and threw a ball of fourteen to the pound, the correct "sporting size" of the bore being $14\frac{1}{2}$. Small wonder that the ball fired from this weapon, in the words of old Ezekiel Baker, the gunmaker, went "very random," and gave birth to the expression "as random as a common musquet."² "In fact, the ranges were so short and the inaccuracy of the musket so incurable, as to make it comparatively immaterial whether the projectile fitted the bore."³ Yet with all its failings, so long as both of the contending forces elected to move in dense formations and to reserve their fire, the musket, random or not, was deadly enough to account for many thousands of gallant soldiers, who, standing in closed ranks, three to

¹ Fortescue, i., 325-6. ² Baker, 4th edition, 1813, 25.

³ Fremantle, "Notes on the Rifle," 5.

six deep, delivered and received volleys at distances sometimes as short as thirty yards, as at Fontenoy in 1745. Here it was that an unflinching British Guardsman, as he literally looked down the barrels of the levelled French muskets prior to their firing the first volley, muttered, "For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful."

The British musket, although it could not be relied upon to hit a mark at even 100 yards, threw its missile of fourteen to the pound with sufficient force and accuracy to slay men standing in closed ranks up to 200 yards and beyond; and so long as the traditional formations of the eighteenth century were adhered to by both combatants, there was no particular need for arms of greater precision. For where proximity to the foe made up for the eccentric flight of the bullets, those troops which could at 50 yards or less deliver the more rapid and destructive fire usually obtained the victory, when despite heavy losses they maintained their formation and steadiness and had the will and determination to close on their opponent with the bayonet. The British fire was usually delivered by volleys from platoons,² that of our Continental foes was by fire from ranks. But, although the smooth-bore musket continued to be the principal weapon for the infantry in all European Armies, the superior accuracy of fire obtained by rifling the barrel had been long known.³

Even as early as the year 1631, the Landgrave William of Hesse had three companies of *chasseurs* armed with rifles and in 1645 the Elector Maximilian of Bavaria formed three regiments of *chasseurs* similarly armed. In 1674 Frederick William of Prussia ordered that in every company of infantry there should be several *chasseurs* and *tirailleurs* armed with rifles.

¹ Fortescue, iii., 115.

² Corresponding to "half-companies" or "sections."

³ A patent for a method for rifling small arms was granted at our Patent Office, on 24 June 1635. Sibbald Scott, i., 165.

History of the Rifle Brigade

In the same year Louis XIV. formed several squadrons armed with rifled carbines.¹ In 1680 eight rifled carbines were issued to each troop of our Household Cavalry.²

The Austrians, as a result of their prolonged wars with the Turks, had taken into their service bands of Croats who acted as light infantry. Their Corps known as the *tirailleurs* of the Tyrol were famed for their deadly fire and with such light troops they covered and protected the ponderous movements of the heavy masses of men, at the time in vogue. Nor were these light infantry only used for defence, for at the Battle of Kolin in 1757, when Frederick the Great attempted his favourite manœuvre of outflanking the Austrians, their light troops harassed his processional movement with such a biting fire as to bring upon them a premature attack before the Prussians had gained their destined positions. Frederick's attack was in consequence delivered piecemeal and he was defeated. It is but a truism to say that had Frederick protected his flank by trained skirmishers he would have avoided this disaster. Napoleon well summed up the reason which caused the Prussians to make the unfortunate attack, "It is the instinct which forbids men to allow themselves to be killed without defending themselves."

It was owing to the imperative necessity of having a means to counterbalance these Austrian light troops that Frederick subsequently increased the company of riflemen he possessed to the strength of a battalion.³

Robins, writing in 1742, stated in his "New Principles of Gunnery," that "whatever State shall thoroughly comprehend the nature and advantage of rifle barrel pieces, . . . and shall introduce into their armies their general use . . . will by this means acquire a superiority which will almost equal anything that has been done at any time by the

¹ "Cours sur les armes à feu portatives." L. Panot, 1851, 38.

² Hans Busk. "Handbook for Hythe," 1860. ³ L. Panot, 39.

particular excellence of any one kind of arms. . . .” How true these words were was very soon brought home to our own troops.

Almost at the same time that the need of light troops to cover and protect the main advance had thus made itself felt on the Continent the British army engaged in the struggle with the French for Canada had experienced a like want. For the methods of war based on precision of drill in closed ranks hitherto adopted with such success were destined to meet with rude reverses when pitted against the French with their Canadian and Indian allies fighting in the dense forests of North America. General Braddock’s disastrous defeat in 1755 with a loss of nigh 75 per cent. of his force from the rifle fire of the French Canadians and Indians may be taken as the turning point in our Military History as regards marksmanship.

When two years later, in 1757, Amherst attacked Louisberg, we read how there was among Wolfe’s brigade “a body of marksmen drawn from different regiments and known as the Light Infantry.”¹ Next year a corps was raised known as “Colonel Gage’s Light Infantry.” This regiment, designed for “scouting and skirmishing only, was clothed in dark brown skirtless coats.” When, in 1758, Amherst’s flotilla advanced on Fort Ticonderoga, Gage’s corps moved in boats in the van and the Light Infantry companies of regiments were massed together and formed a portion of the right flank-guard. Again Amherst in his attack on Crown Point in 1759 had “formed a body of Light Infantry which he had equipped properly for the work.”²

Lastly, in the famous battle before Quebec in 1759, it was a detachment of “Howe’s Light Infantry” which formed the forlorn hope of the landing party and subsequently protected Wolfe’s rear from attack.

Nor were our enemies less well provided on this occasion, for

¹ Fortescue, ii., 317.

² *Ibid.*, ii., 324.

History of the Rifle Brigade

during Montcalm's advance two thousand Indian and Canadian sharpshooters swarmed forward in advance of both flanks. Wolfe threw out skirmishers to meet them. The French line opened fire on our line at 200 yards but Wolfe reserved his fire until it was within thirty-five yards before he delivered "the most perfect volley ever fired on battle-field" which decided the fortunes of the day and was followed up by Briton with bayonet and Highlander with claymore in one furious charge.¹

Once again, the British were not slow in endeavouring to meet the deadly accurate rifle fire of the French Canadians and Indians. Every effort was made to obtain a proportion of rifles with which to equip some of our men in every regiment. It was Colonel Bouquet, a Swiss by nationality, and Colonel of the 1st Battalion of the 60th Royal American Regiment (present King's Royal Rifles) who, knowing the value of marksmanship in the woods, indented for sixteen rifled carbines "for use of the forces employed on the Expedition under General Forbes." Apparently the supply was very limited for only ten were sent to Bouquet, the remaining six being intercepted by Brigadier-General Stanwix.² Riflemen in those days were evidently few and far between.

Thus, during the Seven Years' War both the necessity for Light Infantry and for rifled arms as auxiliaries to the British attack in line three deep, with musket and bayonet, were definitely acknowledged. Fortescue describes in his summary of this war after the Peace of Fontainebleau in 1763, how it was these "bodies of marksmen armed with rifles which prepared the way for the Light Companies and the complete Corps of Light Infantry and Riflemen that were to follow at a later day."³

¹ Fortescue, ii., 382.

² Add. M.S., 21,643 (B.M.). May 25, 1758.

³ Fortescue, ii., 591, *n*.

But the real lesson of the imperative need of well-trained light troops and rifle fire came with the rebellion of the American Colonists. The struggle with our Colonies in many respects resembled the Boer War, and in each case the "hunting instinct," individuality, knowledge of the country and the skill with firearms of our enemies proved to be a severe handicap on our troops. The insurgent Colonists, trained in woodcraft and rifle shooting in their unceasing conflicts with the Indians as well as in their hunting expeditions, repeatedly inflicted heavy losses on our forces, which were at first powerless to reply. At the Battle of Bunker's Hill on 17 June 1775, we read how "Groups of riflemen had been specially detailed to pick off the officers whose glittering gorgets made them an excellent target, and the best American marksmen were kept supplied with a succession of loaded weapons so that they should do the greatest possible execution."¹

To meet such foes on level terms various British officers raised corps of marksmen armed with rifles during the early years of the war. Pre-eminent among these was the gallant but ill-fated Major Patrick Ferguson of Pitfour."² This officer's name stands alone in that he not only raised a corps of Riflemen but was the actual inventor and patentee of the first breech-loading rifle used in our army. In 1776 Ferguson gave an exhibition of the power of his rifle before Lord Townshend, Master General of the Ordnance, Lord Amherst and others at Woolwich.³ His rifle had an ingenious vertical block or plug working on a fine-threaded screw in the rear of the chamber. Access to the chamber was obtained by lowering the block. Into this aperture, first the bullet and then the powder were dropped and the plug raised, thus closing the breech. With this weapon Ferguson could

¹ Fortescue, iii., 157.

² A Biography of this officer is given in "Two Scottish Soldiers," by James Ferguson, published in 1891.

³ *Annual Register*, June 1, 1776.

fire seven shots a minute and in presence of King George III. made five bullseyes at 100 yards, and also put four balls "within as many inches of it." Three of these shots he fired as he lay on his back, the other six standing erect.¹

In the same year he volunteered for service in America and the Commander-in-Chief there, Sir William Howe, was ordered to have a rifle corps formed of volunteers drafted from the various regiments and put under Ferguson's command. In September 1777, at the Battle of Brandywine, with his rifle corps, "he scoured the ground so effectually that there was not a shot to annoy the column on its march." It will amuse some of our soldiers of the present day, who have had experience of the opposition which at times has been shown by those in authority to any advance or improvement which does not emanate from themselves, to learn that Sir William Howe "jealous of the formation of the rifle corps having been ordered without previous consultation with himself, took advantage of Ferguson's being wounded *to reduce it and return the rifles to store.*"²

This curious dislike and jealousy of the "old school" of any military improvement or development is to be met with continually in the history of our army. Twenty years later when Colonel Coote Manningham was engaged in raising the Rifle Corps, it was Lord Cornwallis, whose experiences in America might at least have caused him to appreciate the importance of riflemen, who sneered at it as "a very amusing plaything."³

Could some of the gallant old souls who thus derided all save "pride, pomp and pipeclay" see the weapons and movements of modern armies, it would surely astonish them. Ferguson was given a majority in the (old) 71st Fraser's Highlanders and saw much service. In 1780 his special command consisted of 300 of the American Volunteers formed

¹ *Annual Register*, June 1, 1776.

² "Two Scottish Soldiers," 65.

³ Cornwallis to Ross, October 24, 1800, "Rifle Brigade Chronicle," 1893, 172.

of loyalists from New York and New Jersey known as "Ferguson's Sharpshooters."

When Lord Cornwallis advanced on North Carolina in September 1780, Ferguson was detached to South Carolina with his own small corps of Provincial Riflemen and the local loyalist Militia armed with smooth-bore muskets. Like successful column leaders in other wars, he had incurred the deadly animosity of the Colonial rebels, and his column about 800 strong, was surrounded at a point known as King's Mountain by vastly superior forces. "The Americans took to the trees, shunned everything like personal encounters and while safe under cover, shot down their enemies one by one." The nature of the ground was more favourable to the rifle than to the musket and bayonet and eventually Ferguson and most of his men were slain and the column cut to pieces. The American victors subsequently slew over 100 of their prisoners and hanged a Lieutenant-Colonel and two Captains of the Militia—truly a chivalrous foe !¹

I have dealt thus at length with Ferguson since the raising of the Corps he commanded in 1777 was undoubtedly the first attempt made in our army to form a rifle corps of British soldiers. Till then a few rifles had been issued to various corps, as has been already described, but no steps whatever had been taken to form a corps, much less a regiment. Had Ferguson survived, it is at least a question whether he might not have forestalled Manningham and Stewart in their task in 1800. As it was, in the defeat at King's Mountain there perished not only the man who had the talent and energy to strike out a new line for our infantry, but the excellent breech-loading weapon he had introduced and the British infantry had to wait over ninety years before it received another breech-loader.²

The struggle with our rebellious colonists in America demonstrated

¹ "Two Scottish Soldiers," 99-103, 114.

² The converted Enfield-Snider, the first British breech-loader, was issued to our Army in 1871.

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further the unsuitability of the tactics hitherto adopted in our army when employed against an enemy armed with rifled weapons and more especially for troops fighting in a broken and wooded country. We learnt that although we could by means of steady drill and high discipline make our soldiers face death with marvellous intrepidity in the open, we could not by such means induce them to submit to a deadly rifle fire from scattered and unseen enemies, who, safe beyond the range of the British musket, shot them down with impunity. Small wonder is it, then, that we read how British officers returned from America with the fixed idea that the firearm was now all in all, and that the shock of the bayonet was so rare as to be practically obsolete.¹

It is curious to recall how some 120 years later our officers returned from South Africa with almost precisely the same ideas.

Reverting to the tactical formations for battle on the Continent, Frederick the Great's old methods continued long after Kolin. Nearly twenty years later, in 1774, a French writer, Mesnil-Durand, advocated the use of small columns, covered by a strong line of skirmishers but it was another ten years before this system was generally taught. At this time Napoleon was a student at the Military School in Paris and he was quick to appreciate the value of the method and to use it when later on, in 1796 fortune gave him the opportunity. These new tactics were further admirably suited to the peculiar composition and character of the earlier French Revolutionary Armies, which whilst numbering among their ranks many men of superior intelligence, suffered alike from an enormous influx of untrained recruits and a serious paucity of officers with any military knowledge.

Napoleon used and improved upon these methods and they became popularly known as "Napoleon's tactics." In the French Army, Regiments of Light Infantry were formed, known as *voltigeurs*, *chasseurs à pied* or *corps légers* such as the 9th *Léger*, that famous regiment which

¹ Fortescue, iii., 529-530. ² "A Précis of Modern Tactics" (Home), Ed. 1892, 235-236.

took part in Desaix's victorious advance at Marengo. As men were employed in more extended order, so did the collective effect of their fire diminish since it could not be compared in smashing effect with the well-delivered platoon volley. Napoleon sought to increase this fire effect by using dense lines of skirmishers but, as far as can be gathered, the rifle was not much in favour with him, at any rate, the proportion of rifles he employed was not large.

Meanwhile, in our army some progress had been made in forming Regiments known as Light Infantry. The first corps to bear the name officially was Colonel Morgan's, raised in 1759, which saw service at the Siege of Belle Isle in 1761 and at the capture of Martinique and the Havana in 1762. This regiment is shown in the Annual Army Lists from 1760 to 1763 as the 90th Regiment of Light Infantry, Colonel Gage's Light Infantry already mentioned being shown as the "80th or Regiment of Light-armed Foot" and the 85th Regiment being also styled "Light Infantry." All three regiments were disbanded in 1763 and were raised a second time in 1778 and again disbanded in 1784. In 1794 they were raised a third time, the famous 90th Perthshire Volunteers (now known as the 2nd Battalion of the Scottish Rifles) being trained as a Light Infantry Regiment.

In 1775 a Corps of Hessians was taken into British pay and employed throughout the Rebellion in America. In 1793 recourse was again had to Hessians, and Dittfurth describes them as "superior to the Prussians" since "the majority had served in America where they had learned to manœuvre rapidly and to fight in dispersed order. . . . The Hessian *Jäger* were particularly good light troops and were armed with rifles."¹

In 1796 the Austrian Army had no less than fifteen Battalions or Light Infantry or *Jäger*, the greater number of the men of which were armed with rifled carbines.²

¹ Fortescue, iv., 94.

² Panot, 39.

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The number of foreign troops in our service at this time is as bewildering as it is difficult to chronicle. Besides Continental subsidized Corps there were, in 1793, Regiments composed of French Royalists who had been forced to emigrate during the Terror.¹ Corps were raised, usually under the names of individuals, titles were subject to alteration, some Corps were drafted into others and amalgamated, others were disbanded. A mere inspection of the roll at the Public Record Office of "Pay Lists of Foreign Corps" in the British Service between 1793 and 1817 will disclose many curious names, all or nearly all of which have long since been forgotten. Several of these Regiments were Light Infantry, *Chasseurs* or *Jäger*, and were armed with rifles. Among the first of these raised in 1793-94 were the York Rangers, the York *Chasseurs*,² Hardy's Rifle Regiment, Hompesch's *Chasseurs*, Waldstein's *Chasseurs* and Löwenstein's *Jäger* Regiment, followed later by the *Chasseurs Britanniques*, the Dutch Regiment of Rifles and others.

Enough has been said to show that the creation of both Light Infantry Regiments and of Rifle Corps in the British Army was slowly and by degrees forced upon us.

To recapitulate, from 1759 onwards the want of such troops became more and more felt. Our Military authorities as usual strove to supply this want by subsidizing foreign corps or buying foreign recruits on the Continent to fill the ranks of British Regiments serving abroad. For so jealous was the Nation of the Crown at this period that no Minister ventured to bring any Foreign soldiers to England. Hence any corps which was recruited from such sources was condemned to perpetual foreign service, save indeed for brief periods when the Headquarters and a reduced cadre of officers and N.C.O.'s were brought to England

¹ For an excellent account of the uncertainties attending the number of these Regiments of Foreigners in our Service, see Fortescue, iv., 895-96.

² *Ibid.*, iv., 215.

or preferably, to the Channel Islands,¹ for the ranks to be repleted by recruits from the Continent. No sooner was this effected than they were sent back to the "Plantations" in America or the West Indies. This was the experience of the 3rd Battalion of the 60th in 1793, and of the 4th and 1st Battalions in 1796 and 1797.²

But a step in advance took place when on 30 December 1797 an Act of Parliament was passed authorizing the addition of a fifth Battalion to the 60th (Royal American) Regiment of Foot, as it was then styled, (now known as "The King's Royal Rifles,") "for the better Defence of His Majesty's Colonies in America."³ The 60th had been raised so far back as 1756 for service in our American colonies⁴ and had served there with distinction but being mainly composed of foreigners was not quartered in time of peace in the United Kingdom. The four Battalions forming it were dressed in red, armed with smooth-bore muskets and equipped similarly to the other Regiments of the Line. Early in 1798, three hundred of Hompesch's *Chasseurs* or Light Infantry were drafted to form the nucleus of this 5th Battalion and the following year, six hundred of another foreign corps, Löwenstein's *Jäger* Regiment, were similarly drafted into it in the West Indies, both detachments bringing their own foreign rifles with them. This 5th Battalion, as were its original constituent parts, was dressed and equipped as riflemen. Soon afterwards, in July 1799, a sixth Battalion was added to the 60th⁵ also "for service in America" and whilst the ranks were not yet full, a company or two of riflemen from this Battalion "not two months old and of course composed of foreigners"⁶ were hurried across to Holland on 24 September, where

¹ It has been asserted that Foreigners in British pay can be quartered in the Channel Islands owing to the Bill of Rights, 1 and 2 William and Mary, c. 2, not having been registered there.

² "Chronicles of the 60th." Wallace, 46 *et seq.*

³ 38 Geo. III., c. 13, dated 30 December 1797.

⁴ 29 Geo. II., c. 5, 1756.

⁵ 39 Geo. III., c. 104, dated 12 July 1799.

⁶ Fortescue, iv., 682.

a British force under the Duke of York was operating on the Helder against the French invaders. There could not be more eloquent testimony to the absence of riflemen in the British army at this period, or of the imperative necessity that was felt for their presence.

Before describing in detail the circumstances attending the raising of the Rifle Corps, by which name the present Rifle Brigade was known in its early days, I cannot refrain from giving Fortescue's truly admirable summary of the changes which took place in the British Infantry during the wars of 1793 to 1802. How these changes all worked for the evolution of the new arm—the rifle—in the British Army will be easily seen. It will be remarked that some parts of this account deal with facts already mentioned, but to omit these would have been to mar the excellence of the narrative. Further, I may say at once that it is my intention when describing the raising of the Rifle Corps to enlarge upon other matters upon which Fortescue has but lightly touched. His account, unrivalled as it is in scope and in accuracy, must be viewed from its proper standpoint, an extract from the general history of the British Army, but an extract which, when examined from that of the Regimental Historian, contains much which deeply concerns the Rifle Brigade. Hence to omit it or even to attempt to curtail it, would be both undesirable and inexcusable.

I come now to the principal arm of all—the Infantry, the actual progress of which during the war must be described on the whole as somewhat disappointing. Nevertheless it was on the eve of two great improvements, the one of abolition, the other of creation, which demand particular notice. In the first place, the practice of massing together the companies of Light Infantry and Grenadiers, though we shall meet with it to the eve of the Peninsular War, began to show signs of dying out; and indeed there can be no doubt that in the British Army it was extremely pernicious. The flank companies were always the choicest of a battalion, and the detachment of them for formation into a separate corps signified practically that the remaining companies were ruined for their benefit.

* * * * *

But another grave objection to the practice was that it concealed the real point at issue—namely, the need for Light Infantry properly armed, trained, and equipped as such; which the massed Light Companies of the Army failed utterly to satisfy. Lord Howe had created such infantry in 1757; Tarleton and Simcoe had copied him in the American War of Independence; besides which, as has already been told, every battalion had organized for itself a company of riflemen. Grey, with American reminiscences strong upon him, had given his light companies a special course of instruction at Barbados in 1794; but Murray and Craig had been obliged to resort to foreign levies under the different denominations of rangers, *chasseurs* and *Jäger*. In fact the only soldier untaught in the work of light infantry was the British. In 1795, a beginning was indeed made by forming two companies of marksmen in the North Riding Militia of York, which were the first regular British riflemen ever seen in the country; but though they were dressed in green, they were neither selected, trained, nor properly accoutred for their work. In fact they were a mere parody on true light infantry and might just as well have been dressed in scarlet and armed with a musket.¹

It seems, indeed, that the authorities were positively afraid to enjoin novel and peculiar instruction upon any but a new corps. In vain General Money urged that one-fifth of the British Infantry of the Line and half of the Supplementary Militia should be at once converted into genuine riflemen: no heed was paid to him. In campaign after campaign the French tactics threw the need for such soldiers into stronger relief; but, as the foreign corps in the British service gradually perished from want of recruits, the British Generals found themselves more and more at a loss to supply the want. The fragments of some of these corps were indeed swept together in 1798 to form a Fifth battalion of the Sixtieth, which was at once constituted into a rifle battalion, with a peculiar dress of green jacket, white waistcoat and blue pantaloons; but though this introduced the thin edge of the wedge into the British Army, it did not affect soldiers of British nationality.²

Then came the campaign of the Helder, wherein a few companies of riflemen might more than once have turned the scale, especially during the advance of Moore's brigade upon Egmont op Zee; but none were to hand, and for want of them England failed of success and very nearly lost the best officer in the Army.

At last, however, in January 1800, the Duke of York ordered a detachment of three officers and thirty-four men to be furnished by

¹ Militia Letter Books, 24 July 1795. "James's Regimental Companion," vol. ii., 393-394.

² S.C.L.B., 12 January 1798; C.C.L.B., 19 January 1798.

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each of fifteen¹ regiments of the Line to Colonel Coote Manningham for instruction in the use of the rifle and in the exercise of true light infantry. Manningham had commanded several light companies under Grey in the West Indies, and was therefore well qualified for the work ; but the response to the Duke of York's order was not very cordial. Six of the selected regiments seized the opportunity to send to him all their unserviceable men, and one in particular supplied no fewer than twenty-two out of thirty who were of this description. None the less these detachments were assembled in March at Horsham, from which they marched to Windsor Forest, there to be trained by Lieutenant-Colonel William Stewart, an excellent officer of broad ideas. It had never been intended that the men should be permanently kept together, the design being presently to send them back to their own battalions to diffuse knowledge of the rifle in the Army ; for, according to the official view, it was impossible from the nature of the case that Manningham's corps should be a permanent one. However, at Stewart's request, the whole² of it was embarked in July for the expedition to Ferrol, and was not broken up until some weeks later at Malta. What then happened to it is something of a mystery, but the corps appears to have been recreated in the course of the autumn with a new establishment of ten companies under its former officers, but with men chiefly drawn from the disembodied Irish Fencibles. The patterns of its clothing and accoutrements were settled in December, and on March 31 1801 a letter of service was granted, apparently as an afterthought, for the formation of Manningham's Rifle Corps. Possibly there was some doubt even to the last whether the companies should be kept together or again dispersed to preach the gospel of the rifle to the Army ; but the wiser counsel prevailed, and thus was born the regiment which still marches to the tune of Ninety-five, but is not less famous under its later name of the Rifle Brigade.³

The zeal for the multiplication of riflemen did not at once exhaust itself, for in September 1801 a rifle company was added to the Second Battalion of the Sixtieth ; and in July it was decreed that all descriptions of riflemen should be dressed alike, without distinction, except of buttons and facings.⁴ The uniform consisted of a short green jacket and close-fitting pantaloons, with a plain leather cap for the men and a light dragoon's helmet for the officers. The sergeants carried a whistle which alone marked their difference from the privates.

¹ Fourteen was number actually called upon. See *C.C.L.B.*, 7 January, 8 February 1800 ; and "Cornwallis Corres.," iii., 177.

² Half the corps only embarked.

³ *S.C.L.B.*, 1 December 1800, 12 March 1801 ; *C.C.L.B.*, 18 December 1800.

⁴ *S.C.L.B.*, 24 September 1801 ; *C.C.L.B.*, 13 July 1802.

The officers wore a black shoulder-belt with silver ornaments and a whistle, besides the crimson sash which was worn around the waist by all who held the King's commission ; while a curved sword together with heavy black lace on the jacket, helped to assimilate their dress to that of light dragoons. The weapon of the men was a rifle called the Baker rifle, which though a clumsy weapon was reputed to be extremely accurate up to three hundred yards range ; their side-arm was a sword which could be fixed as a bayonet. Cartridges were not used as a rule, but every man carried a powder-horn and bag of bullets to enable him to load his rifle with what was called "running ball," which was the method preferred for this particular arm. The buttons of the dress were dull, all ornaments of bright metal were discarded, and the barrel of the rifle was brown, so as to make the men as little conspicuous as possible. Finally, all movements were carried out by signal of bugle-horn, the calls for which had been lately revised ; and a treatise upon light troops by M. de Jarry was recommended for general guidance and instruction.

Manningham and Stewart needed little teaching, for they were men who could think for themselves. In the year 1801 the Standing Orders of the regiment were drawn up, containing novelties positively startling to the old school of martinets. Therein provision was made not only for bestowing on the soldiers medals for good conduct and for bravery in the field, but also for careful and systematic training in musketry, for classifying men according to their skill at the target, for distinction of the best as marksmen, for the formation of a regimental school with periodic examinations, for the delivery of lectures upon military subjects, and even for the encouragement of athletic exercises. It needed only the finishing touches of Moore in the camp at Shorncliffe, for the new Rifle Corps to begin life with a regimental system that would defy the wear of a century. It is no exaggeration to say that the foundation of the Rifle Brigade marks a new era in the history of the British Infantry.¹

¹ Fortescue, iv., 916-921.

CHAPTER II.

THE FORMATION OF THE EXPERIMENTAL CORPS OF RIFLEMEN.

Colonel Coote Manningham's famous letter—The Horse Guards Circular—The fourteen Detachments for the Experimental Corps of Riflemen assemble at Horsham—The "Camp of Exercise" at Swinley—The double formation of the Rifle Corps—The call for volunteers from the Fencible Regiments—Roll of the Regiments which supplied volunteers—The break up of the Swinley Camp—The Ferrol Detachment—The move to Blatchington Barracks—The Officers are gazetted—Irish Gazettes and London Gazettes—Roll of the first Officers of the first British Rifle Regiment—The merging of the Experimental Corps into the Rifle Corps—The strength and establishment of the Rifle Corps on 24 January 1801—Extracts from "The English Military Library," February 1801.

IT was during the closing months of the eighteenth century that Colonel Coote Manningham and Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. William Stewart addressed a representation to the military authorities, pointing out the importance of having a regiment in the British Army furnished with a rifled arm and trained in the special duties of riflemen. This document has unfortunately disappeared. Sir William Cope was convinced, after protracted search had been made at the War Office, that it no longer existed. This was between 1870 and 1875. It has been suggested that in all probability it had been transferred to the Small Arms Department, of which the records were formerly kept in the Tower of London and that it may have perished in the great fire there in 1841.

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In consequence of the suggestions contained in this letter, the following circular was issued to the Commanding Officers of fourteen Regiments of the Line¹ by order of the Commander-in-chief, H.R.H. Frederick, Duke of York.

CIRCULAR.

HORSE GUARDS,

17 January 1800.

Addressed to Officers Commanding the 2nd Battalion Royals, the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th, 49th, 55th, 69th, 71st, 72nd, 79th, 85th, and 92nd Regiments.

SIR,—I have the honour to inform you that it is His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief's intention to form a corps of detachments from the different regiments of the line for the purpose of its being instructed in the use of the rifle and in the system of exercise adopted by soldiers so armed. It is His Royal Highness's pleasure that you shall select from the regiment under your command, 2 sergeants, 2 corporals and 30 private men for this duty, all of them being such men as appear most capable of receiving the above instructions, and most competent to the performance of the duty of Riflemen. These non-commissioned officers and privates are not to be considered as being drafted from their regiments, but merely as detached for the purpose above recited; they will continue to be borne on the strength of their regiments, and will be clothed by their respective colonels.

His Royal Highness desires you will recommend 1 captain, 1 lieutenant, and 1 ensign of the regiment under your command who volunteer to serve in the corps of Riflemen in order that His Royal Highness may select from the officers recommended from the regiments which furnish their quota on this occasion a sufficient number of officers for the Rifle Corps. These officers are to be considered as detached on duty from their respective regiments, and will share in all the promotion that occurs in them during their absence.

Eight drummers will be required to act as bugle-horns, and I request you will acquaint me, for the information of His Royal Highness, whether

¹ The first letters of the Adjutant-General to Colonel Manningham mention only six of these regiments, *C.C.L.B.*, 7 January, 8 February 1800.

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you have any in the Regiment qualified to act or of a capacity to be easily instructed.

I have, &c., &c.,
HARRY CALVERT,
A.G.

It will thus be seen that from its first inception it was the intention of the authorities to form the Regiment as a *corps d'élite*; the intention being that the men specially selected by each Commanding Officer should be the most capable and suitable for the work. With regard to the officers, a double selection was intended, since only eight of each rank, or thirty-two in all, were required to officer the new corps out of the forty-two names ordered to be sent in. It is characteristic of the difficulty which has ever been experienced in our army of carrying out the best schemes to obtain efficiency that despite this very explicit circular sent out by the Adjutant-General to the Forces, calling for picked men, several corps took the opportunity to get rid of their most undesirable men. Other Regiments however happily took a very different view of the duty of selecting men to form their Rifle detachment. Thus the Regimental Orders of the 92nd Highlanders for 24 February 1800 contain the following¹ :—

The detachment of riflemen will march tomorrow under the command of Ensign Cameron. The Major expects that the detachment will conduct itself in such a manner as to do credit to the Regiment they belong to and Ensign Cameron will so exert himself on the march, and after he has arrived at Horsham, that his detachment will appear as respectable in the corps they are to join, as the regiment has always done among other Regiments.

There is a ring of true esprit de corps in this Regimental Order of the gallant 92nd Highlanders, worthy of a regiment with such splendid traditions.

The Marching Order Books of the year 1800 give full details of the assemblage at Horsham of the various detachments composing the

¹ "History of the Gordon Highlanders," by Lt.-Col. Greenhill Gardyne, vol. i., 83.

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Rifle Corps. On 20 February orders were issued to the detachments of eleven of the Regiments quartered in the counties of Kent, Sussex, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk to march to Horsham, and on the 21st the remaining three, belonging to regiments quartered in Scotland, were ordered "to embark at Leith, proceed to the Thames and land at Gravesend for Horsham." The detachments began to arrive during the first week in March and before the end of the month had all assembled. Symptoms of the unsuitable nature of some of the soldiers whom their Commanding Officers had selected as "most competent to the performance of the duties of Riflemen" are discernible in the pages of the Marching Order Books. Thus on 22 March there is an entry ordering six of the corps to send men to replace fifty-two men (of which one corps alone had supplied twenty-two !) found inefficient. Again on 15 July, a sergeant is detached to return with "rejected men" *via* Bristol to Ireland.

Regiment	Lieut.-Colonel	Captains	Lieutenants	Ensigns	Sergeants	Drummers	Rank and File
2nd Battn. 1st Foot	..	I	I	I	3	I	32
21st "	I	I	2	I	32
23rd "	2	I	31
25th "	I	...	2	...	32
27th "	...	I	I	I	2	I	33
29th "	I	I	2	I	32
49th "	...	I	I	I	2	I	32
55th "	2	I	31
67th "	I	...	I	...	...	...	...
69th "	...	I	I	...	2	I	32
71st "	...	I	I	...	2	I	32
72nd "	...	I	...	I	2	I	32
79th "	I	I	2	I	32
85th "	28
92nd "	I	I	2	I	32
Totals ...	I	6	11	8	27	12	443
Wanting to complete	I	I	5
Establishment ...	I	6	11	8	28	13	448

History of the Rifle Brigade

The preceding table is a return of the strength of the Rifle Corps on its first formation.

I have taken especial pains to verify this state which was obtained by Sir W. Cope many years ago and with the satisfactory result that I have been able to account individually for every one of the twenty-six officers and 482 N.C.O.'s and men included in it. Although the totals here given correspond exactly with Sir W. Cope's there are a few discrepancies in the numbers supplied by the various regiments. Those given by me are in every case taken from the Company pay lists.

The ways in which the various regiments viewed the status of the men thus detached is amusingly shown by the entries in their pay lists. Thus seven regiments note them as with "the Rifle Corps," one as on the "Rifle Detachment," one as "detached on command," the 27th write off each one of their men as "Gone to Horesham (*sic*) as Rifle Man" whilst the 92nd note each one as a "Riffle Man." This quaint spelling of the word rifle is constantly met with in the military returns of this period.

The Corps may be considered to have been now fairly started. The first parade of the "Experimental Corps" at Horsham was held on 1 April 1800. During this and the following month the Corps was trained assiduously in the duties of riflemen. In May it marched to the camp of exercise at Swinley, near Windsor Forest, about 5 miles west of Chobham Common where, over fifty years later, in 1854, was formed the famous camp prior to the Crimean War. For many years I strove unsuccessfully to locate the precise spot of this camp at Swinley and it was not until 1909 that Colonel Gerald Boyle came across an entry in the Marching Order Books of 1800, dated 13 May, in which a detachment of the 92nd Highlanders is noted as being "on the march from Arundel to Cæsar's Camp near Bagshot, to join the Rifle Corps there." Now "Cæsar's Camp near Bagshot" is a spot well known to every officer who has been a Sandhurst cadet or at the Staff

College. It lies about 3 miles due north of the Royal Military College, just south of "the Ninemile Ride" and the same distance west of Bagshot Park. Nowadays, the whole of the country around it is densely overgrown with fir trees, but at the beginning of last century much of the heathland between Ascot and Wolmer Forest was open country. There is a good water supply just north of Cæsar's Camp which no doubt influenced the choice of the site of the camp of exercise.

The Experimental Corps thus assembled at Swinley Camp seems to have created a favourable impression by its smartness and efficiency and Mr. W. H. Fremantle writing on 15 July to the Marquis of Buckingham mentions it as "being good, and much more useful" than some other regiments then in that camp.¹

In July it was decided to send an Expeditionary Force under Lieutenant-General Sir James Pulteney and Admiral Sir J. Borlase Warren to the north coast of Spain. Stewart sought and obtained permission to accompany this force with three Companies of the Experimental Corps.

Before narrating the events of this expedition I must describe the steps taken to fill the ranks of the newly raised corps to its effective strength, since they were carried out contemporaneously with the training of the detachments at Swinley Camp. There has always been a certain amount of difficulty in tracing the various steps connected with the first raising of the Rifle Corps in 1800. Sir William Cope describes the assemblage of the detachments at Horsham in the spring of 1800, and despatch of six of them to Ferrol in August and how subsequently these detachments were ordered to rejoin their corps in the Mediterranean. He then says "The Rifle Corps was immediately re-formed, principally from detachments of Fencible regiments serving in Ireland."²

¹ "Memoirs of the Court and Cabinet of George III.," vol. iii., 88.

² Cope, 4.

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The "Narrative of the services of the 1st Battalion" which was drawn up under the supervision of Sir A. Norcott (who joined the Army in 1793 and the Rifle Corps in 1802) says "The Rifle Corps was newly formed from detachments of Fencible Regiments serving in Ireland and from regiments of the line and all the Officers who had served in the Experimental Corps, as it was termed, appointed to it." There can be no doubt that Sir W. Cope by using the word "re-formed" for "newly formed" as above has unintentionally caused some confusion in the minds of those unacquainted with the facts of the case. Thus Major Lawrence Archer in his "British Army" says absurdly enough "*another* Corps of riflemen was however at once formed." This has been taken by some as a proof that "the Experimental Corps of Riflemen" and its outcome "the Rifle Corps" were two distinct creations. Even Fortescue when writing of this incident says "what then happened is somewhat of a mystery." What actually happened was this. On 2 March 1800 only eleven days after the order for the assembly of the fourteen detachments at Horsham, and whilst most of them were still on the march thither, the Horse Guards called upon "33 of the Fencible Regiments² in Ireland to give each 12 active young men as volunteers to the Rifle Corps, receiving ten guineas each, their services to be unlimited as to time and place." These same terms were at the same time offered to volunteers for the Highland Regiments and no less than 2,500 men of the Scottish Fencibles were thus recruited for them.

It will therefore be seen that in the first raising of the Rifle Corps there were two separate sources of supply, the "paper strength" of the projected Corps being thus composed :—

¹ See p. 16 *ante*. Fortescue, iv., 919.

² Fencibles were practically Regular troops enlisted for service in the United Kingdom and for the duration of the war only and were designed to liberate the Regular Army from the United Kingdom for service abroad.

Formation of the Experimental Corps

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	R. and F.
Detachments from 14 Line Regiments 448
Volunteers from 33 Fencible Regiments 396
	<hr style="width: 10%; margin: 0 auto;"/>
Total	844

Twenty-six Fencible Regiments at once responded to the appeal, many of the volunteers from them were attested as early as 7 July 1800. The various parties were assembled at Athlone, whence they marched to Cove and embarked on board H.M.S. *Modeste* (a 32-gun frigate armed *en flûte*) their strength being 5 sergeants, 296 rank and file, 20 women and 8 children. Major Callendar of the Rifle Corps was in command, with Lieutenant L. H. Bennet. The *Modeste* sailed on 24 August and reached Spithead on the 28th, the detachment landed on Southsea beach and were quartered in Portsmouth.¹ On 24 September the General at Portsmouth received orders for "the Volunteers for the Rifle Corps lately arrived from Ireland to march from their present quarters to Blatchington Barracks."² The list on next page is an extract from the Pay List of the Rifle Corps for August 1800.

That the appeal to the Fencible Regiments for 396 recruits at a bounty of 10 guineas each met with full success and was not limited to this detachment is proved by the successive monthly pay-lists of the Rifle Corps. Thus while that of September 1800 only contains the names of 290 Fencibles, in October 50 men are added and in November 52 more. All these men were attested between 7 July and 15 August. It is interesting to note that some 230 of the 396 Fencibles came from Scottish and Highland Corps. From time to time I have come across references showing that a "Highland Company" existed in the early days of the Rifle Corps.

¹ Captain's Journal, vol. 1393. Muster Book Series, vol. xiii., 904.

² Marching Order Books, 1800.

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PAY LIST AND MUSTER ROLLS OF DETACHMENTS OF VOLUNTEERS FROM
FENCIBLE REGIMENTS IN IRELAND FOR THE FORMATION OF A RIFLE
CORPS, FROM 23 TO 24 AUGUST 1800.

Aberdeen Regiment	.	.	.	.	.	.	11
Angus	„	.	.	.	.	.	12
Argyle	„	.	.	.	.	.	12
Bredalbin (<i>sic</i>)	.	.	.	.	.	.	12
Caithness Leagion (<i>sic</i>)	.	.	.	.	.	.	9
Clanalpin Regiment	.	.	.	.	.	.	8
Devon and Cornwall Regiment	.	.	.	.	.	.	9
Dunbarton	„	.	.	.	.	.	12
Durham	„	.	.	.	.	.	12
Elgin	„	.	.	.	.	.	12
Essex	„	.	.	.	.	.	11
Fraser	„	.	.	.	.	.	11
Fifeshire	„	.	.	.	.	.	9
Glengarry	„	.	.	.	.	.	11
Lochaber	„	.	.	.	.	.	8
N. Lowland	„	.	.	.	.	.	12
McLeod's	„	.	.	.	.	.	12
Manx	„	.	.	.	.	.	8
Nottingham	„	.	.	.	.	.	11
Northampton	„	.	.	.	.	.	11
Prince of Wales'	„	.	.	.	.	.	12
Reay's	„	.	.	.	.	.	10
Ross and Cromarty	„	.	.	.	.	.	9
Suffolk	„	.	.	.	.	.	12
Somerset	„	.	.	.	.	.	12
Tay	„	.	.	.	.	.	11
York	„	.	.	.	.	.	11

 290

(Certified)

 JAS. INNES,
Paym. Rifle Regt.

I must now trace the movements of the eight remaining detachments which were left at Swinley at the end of July when Stewart's

party embarked for Ferrol. These detachments marched to Blatchington Barracks, close to Seaford in Sussex, arriving there early in August where they were joined during the following month by the 290 Fencible recruits from Ireland as already described. Some time in September the order for the men of the Line detachments to rejoin their respective Corps was received. On 1 October we find that the detachments belonging to the 29th, 49th, 55th, and 85th, whose Regiments were at that time all quartered in the Channel Islands, were ordered "to rejoin their corps." They marched for Hilsea on 3 October arrived there on the 8th and embarked in succession during the winter months. On the same date (1 October) the detachments belonging to the 21st, 71st, and 72nd were ordered to march to Liverpool to join their corps in Ireland. The last of these eight detachments, that belonging to the 69th Foot, did not rejoin it until some time in the following year, the Regiment having sailed for the West Indies in July 1800. As will be described later on, of the six detachments sent to Ferrol, five rejoined their respective corps at Malta, the sixth, that from the 25th Foot, is noted in the October Pay-lists as rejoining the 25th "in the Mediterranean."

Some years ago I was at considerable pains to ascertain how many of the N.C.O.'s and men composing the fourteen Line detachments which formed the nucleus of the Rifle Corps continued to serve in it after the order for them to rejoin their respective corps was issued. The process was a laborious one and involved tracing each man through the successive Pay-Lists and Muster Rolls of the Regiments during the whole period included. The result showed that no less than 357 N.C.O.'s and men out of the 482 originally detached to form the Experimental Corps rejoined their Regiments. A certain number were subsequently transferred to the Rifle Corps and appear in the Muster Rolls of the Regiment as "discharged and transferred to the Rifle Corps." Thus for example the Muster Rolls of

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January 1801 show 6 men of the 71st Regiment as "discharged and transferred to Rifle Corps," out of the 30 they had originally contributed. Of the Sergeants and Corporals a small proportion also elected to remain with their new Corps. It will be remarked that the order for the N.C.O.'s and men detached to the Experimental Corps to rejoin their regiments appears to have been carried out in a very leisurely manner.

By the end of the year 1800 the "Rifle Corps" numbered 435 N.C.O.'s and men and thenceforward it grew steadily. Recruiting parties under Lieutenants were sent to Manchester, Nottingham, Berwick, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The subsequent gradual augmentation of the Corps of Riflemen will be described later.

I will now describe in detail how the "Rifle Corps" was officered upon being gazetted. The fact that at this period a considerable proportion of the Experimental Corps were serving in Egypt and the Mediterranean and that another portion were at home with the companies at Blatchington renders the history of the Regiment at this period somewhat intricate.

The first "Gazette" relating to the officers of the Rifle Corps is the *London Gazette* of 18 October 1800, in which the following entries occur :—

WAR OFFICE, DUBLIN CASTLE,
13 October.

His Majesty has been pleased to make the following promotions in the Army on this Establishment :—

RIFLE CORPS (now forming).

Major George Callander, from the 62nd Foot, to be Major, dated 1 August 1800.

Captain Beckwith, from the 71st Foot, to be Captain.

Lieutenant Alex. D. Cameron, from the 21st Foot, to be Captain.

Lieutenants R. Duncan and E. B. Law, from the 21st Foot, to be Lieutenants. Dated as above.

Formation of the Experimental Corps

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The regiments to which all these officers belonged were at this time on the Irish Establishment.

On 21 October, three days after this *Irish Gazette* the *London Gazette* (dated 11 October 1800) formally gazetted

"A CORPS OF RIFLEMEN."

Colonel Coote Manningham from the 41st Foot to be Colonel.

Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. Wm. Stewart from the 67th Foot, to be Lieutenant-Colonel.

Major George Callander from the 62nd Foot, to be Major.

Captain Hamlet Wade from the 25th Foot, to be Major.

To be Captains.

Captain Robert Travers from the 79th Foot.

Captain Cornelius Cuyler from the 69th Foot.

Captain Thomas Christopher Gardner from the 2nd Battalion Royals.

Captain Henry Shepherd from the 49th Foot.

Captain Lieutenant Thomas Sidney Beckwith from the 71st Foot.

Captain Timothy Hamilton from the 27th Foot.

Lieutenant Alex. D. Cameron from the 21st Foot, to be Captain-Lieutenant.

To be Lieutenants.

Lieutenant Blois Lynch	from the 29th Foot.
„ J. A. Grant	„ 25th „
„ John Stuart	„ 79th „
„ Peter O'Hare	„ 69th „
„ Thomas Stirling Edmonston (<i>sic</i>)	„ 2nd Battalion Royals.
„ Robert Duncan	„ 21st Foot.
„ Alex. Clarke	„ 92nd „
„ Neil Campbell	„ 67th „
„ John Ross	„ 72nd „
2nd Lieutenant Edward Bedwell Law	„ 21st „
Ensign Henry Powell	„ 2nd Battalion Royals.
„ William Cotter	„ 79th Foot.
„ John ¹ Cameron	„ 92nd „
„ — Douglas	„ 29th „
„ L. H. Bennet	„ 68th „

¹ A clerical error. It should be Alexander.

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To be Adjutant.

Lieutenant J. A. Grant.

To be Quartermaster.

Sergeant-Major Donald M'Kay.

It is well to reiterate here that every one of these officers had served in the original "Experimental Corps" of Riflemen. All their commissions were dated 25 August and subsequent days. A number of second lieutenants were very shortly afterwards appointed to "The Rifle Corps," as it was now officially named, and they may justly be considered as being among the original founders of the Regiment since they shared in the task of its formation. It will thus be seen that the "Rifle Corps" was the direct outcome and unquestionable offspring of the "Experimental Corps."

The strength and establishment of the Rifle Corps on 24 January 1801 was as follows :—

	Colonel	Lieutenant-Colonel	Majors	Captains	First Lieutenants	Second Lieutenants	Paymasters	Adjutants	Quartermaster	Surgeon	Assistant Surgeon	Staff-Sergeants	Sergeants	Buglers	Corporals	Private Riflemen
Strength as per Muster Roll	1	1	2	8	8	8	1	1	1	1	1	5	36	17	40	442
Wanting to complete	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4	1	...	318
Establishment ...	1	1	2	8	8	8	1	1	1	1	1	5	40	18	40	760

The following account of the Rifle Corps which appeared in "The English Military Library" in February 1801 is of interest as showing

alike how little was known about riflemen and their duties at this period and how this introduction of a Regiment of Riflemen into the British service was viewed as an entirely new departure.

From "The English Military Library," No. xxix., February 1801, vol. ii., Art. clxxx., p. 564.

ACCOUNT OF THE RIFLE CORPS COMMANDED BY COLONEL COOTE MANNINGHAM, WITH A DESCRIPTION OF ITS UNIFORM, ARMS, AND ACCOUTREMENTS, MANŒUVRES, AND MANUAL EXERCISE.

If ever there was a period which required the extension and advancement of this addition to our military establishment, it is peculiarly that, when a bold and enterprising enemy, acquiring the disposal of an immense army from its peace with Austria, will not slip the occasion to employ his forces in such directions, as to menace the coasts at least, if not actually to invade the territory of some part of these united realms.

In the latter, by no means improbable, event, a corps, which can disperse itself over an extensive tract of country, and unite in a body with rapidity and precision; a corps which, from the hedges and eminences that constitute the localities of the British Isles, can gall and annoy the enemy in his march, and act where it is impracticable to attack, either in line or column, must be of peculiar importance in the view of every unprejudiced mind, and its utility be sufficiently obvious.

Corps of riflemen have long constituted a part of the military establishments on the Continent, and during the disastrous war with the colonies, the execution done by the American and Hessian riflemen, or Yägers, who, posted behind thickets, and scattered wide in the country, frequently picked off the officer, and galled and annoyed the King's troops in their march, constitutes a permanent feature in the military history of that period; and in the more recent expedition to Holland, the dauntless courage and steady perseverance of the British troops were, in many instances, exclusive of the loss of many of our gallant officers, ineffectually opposed to the rapid movements, and too fatally certain fire of the enemy's scattered riflemen.

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So highly useful, and of such improved importance have been the services of these troops in the Continental armies, that the present illustrious Commander-in-chief, who suffers no plan for meliorating and bringing to perfection our military establishment, to escape his observation, was at once impressed with the utility of these species of service, and the expediency of adopting it.

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CHAPTER III.

THE FERROL EXPEDITION.

The Ferrol Expedition—The Events which led to it—Officers and Detachments selected—The Landing at Ferrol—The Baptism of Fire—Stewart wounded—Casualties among the Riflemen—General Pulteney withdraws—His reasons—The Origin of the “Regimental Birthday”—Fresh Orders from England—Sir Ralph Abercromby proceeds to Egypt—Nine officers and 158 men of the Rifle Corps accompany him.

WE must now revert to the six detachments of the Experimental See Map I,
p. 38. Corps, which in the midst of their first season's training as Riflemen at Swinley Camp were suddenly ordered to take part in the expedition to Ferrol. The events which brought about this expedition require a passing notice. Throughout the first half of the year 1800, several British expeditions, designed to distract and damage the schemes of the First Consul, were planned and rejected. Some were partially carried out and as incontinently abandoned. At one time Brest was our objective and at another Belle Isle and Quiberon Bay. Lieutenant-General Sir Ralph Abercromby who was in command of some 12,000 British troops at Minorca, then a British possession, received orders and counter-orders innumerable. In May he was to push the siege of the French troops yet holding out in Malta, then he was to attack Teneriffe, an island 2,000 miles distant in the Atlantic. Next he was to detach a force to Genoa to assist the Austrians in Lombardy. In June and July he was urged to disembark at Leghorn to defend Tuscany

and Naples and at the same time recommended to employ his whole force to defend the Riviera !

It was now that the First Consul negotiated with Spain to induce her to cede six ships of war to France in return for certain bribes, his object being to force Spain into war with Portugal with the ulterior object of driving the British Fleet from its commanding strategic position at Lisbon. As usual, England was not slow to appreciate any attempt to injure or circumscribe her sea-power and the upshot was that on 1 August fresh orders were sent to Sir Ralph Abercromby to endeavour to destroy the Spanish Naval forces and arsenals by attacks upon Ferrol, Vigo and Cadiz. Abercromby was to sail at once for Gibraltar with 10,000 men where he was promised reinforcements from England prior to making an attack on Cadiz. Meanwhile Sir James Pulteney was given command of these reinforcements numbering about 11,000 men and was ordered to proceed to Quiberon Bay and to be joined there by Lord St. Vincent's squadron. With Pulteney's force were the detachments of the Experimental Corps of Riflemen under Stewart. These detachments, about 170 strong, marched out from Swinley on 2 August and arrived at Portsmouth two days later, and embarked on 5 August.

The constitution of this small corps was as follows :—

Lieutenant-Colonel Hon. W. Stewart (in command). Major Hamlet Wade, 25th Regiment. Captain Robert Travers, 79th Regiment. Captain Thos. C. Gardner, 2nd Battalion Royals. Captain Timothy Hamilton, 27th Regiment. Lieutenant John Stewart, 79th Regiment. Lieutenant Thos. Edmonstoune, 2nd Battalion Royals. Lieutenant Alex. Clark, 92nd Regiment. Lieutenant Robert Duncan, 21st Regiment. Ensign Alex. Cameron, 92nd Regiment. Ensign Wm. Cotter, 79th Regiment. Lieutenant and Adjutant J. A. Grant, 25th Regiment. The detachments were from the Royals, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 79th, and 92nd Regiments. Captain Thomas Sidney Beckwith, subsequently

widely known as a leader of light troops, accompanied the Expedition as Aide-de-Camp to General Morshead.

This expedition to Ferrol is a good example of the casual methods which were so conspicuous in our military efforts of this period. Nobody seems to have been very clear as to the plan of attack or to have had any definite knowledge of the resistance likely to be met with. The force actually assembled at Quiberon Bay numbered but little over 13,000 men, and with this and the aid of a Squadron from Lord St. Vincent's fleet under Sir John Borlase Warren it was proposed to go to Ferrol in Galicia, to disembark the force and to destroy the Spanish dockyards and arsenal there. Having effected this, it was to proceed to Vigo and repeat the process.

On 25 August, a date for ever to be remembered by British Riflemen, the fleet of transports escorted by Sir John Warren's ships arrived before Ferrol and anchored in a small bay open to the Atlantic about two miles north of Cape Prioriño and the entrance to the harbour. Three of our men-of-war first silenced a small fort on the low hills near the foreshore, north of Doniño's Laguna. The disembarkation of our troops began the same evening, the main body landing near the fort whilst a Brigade under Major-General Lord Cavan was ordered to land in another small bay about three miles northward.

The Rifle Corps under Stewart were the first to land, and they were at once pushed forward as an advance guard to seize some heights about a mile to the south-east which overlooked the Harbour and Fortress of Ferrol. The advance was rendered difficult by the steep and broken nature of the ground, and on approaching the summit the Spaniards were found to be strongly posted along the crest line. A sharp skirmish followed, which ended in the enemy being driven from the heights. The Spaniards made several attempts to dislodge the Riflemen, but without success. In this affair, ever considered as the Baptism of fire of British Riflemen, Colonel Stewart was dangerously

wounded, being shot through the body. At one o'clock in the morning a halt was ordered, and the troops which had reached the summit of the ridges of Balon, as they were called, waited until the break of day. Meanwhile, the disembarkation was vigorously carried on, and by 5 a.m. on the 26th the whole force was landed. The advance was resumed at dawn, the attack being led by the 52nd. The Spanish troops at once opened a brisk fire, but the British forming into line and breaking into a charge, they gave way and retreated along the ridge towards Ferrol. The British were now in undisputed possession of the whole ridge of Heights of Balon and Brion, which completely command the Fortress and shipping in the harbour.¹ The entrance to the harbour was closed by a boom, but the British sailors managed to drag three guns from the foreshore over the steep heights and bring them into action within half a mile of the obstacle, taking the Spanish defences in rear. So far, so good ; but like in so many other British expeditions of this period, our Government had apparently entered into this one with the vaguest possible ideas of how the capture and destruction of the arsenal at Ferrol was to be effected or of the equipment of the force to carry out their orders. Fortescue well summarizes the situation on the morning of 26 August 1800 as follows :—

Pulteney then examined the works with his brigadiers, and came to the conclusion that to carry the place by *coup de main* or escalade was out of the question. It was surrounded on three sides by the sea, and the landward side was regularly defended along its whole length of two thousand yards by formidable fortifications of masonry including a high wall upon the curtain, with seven bastions of considerable elevation and other flank-defences. The garrison numbered seven thousand men, or over two thousand more than were necessary to man the works ; cannon could be seen mounted on the ramparts ; and everything (as was afterwards ascertained by accounts from Madrid) was ready to meet an attack. A siege also was out of the question. It must have been lengthy ; and meanwhile the fleet was lying insecure in

¹ "Records of the 79th Highlanders," 27.

an open roadstead. But even if the works covering the harbour had been taken and the fleet admitted to a safe anchorage, no more than eight thousand men could have been spared from the protection of the communications for the double duty of conducting the siege and shielding the besiegers against any army that the united forces of all Spain could dispatch for relief of the town. The operation would in fact have been not only foolhardy but foolish; and with the full assent of his brigadiers, Pulteney ordered the army to be re-embarked. He had lost in the skirmish of the morning eighty-four killed and wounded: the Spaniards had lost as many, besides thirty or forty prisoners. The chief military interest of the action was that it brought under fire for the first time three companies of a regiment whose ranks were still not wholly filled—the Ninety-fifth now better known as the Rifle Brigade.¹

In the Spanish attack on the morning of the 26th three officers of the Experimental Corps of Riflemen, Captains Travers and Hamilton and Lieutenant Edmonstoune and eight Riflemen were wounded. Some of the men subsequently died of their wounds. This heavy proportion of the Colonel and three officers hit to eight men points to the probability that the officers exposed themselves unduly. It is easy to imagine that the traditions of the Service in these early days of the Corps were all against an officer taking cover. The losses of the 52nd on the morning of the 26th were eleven men killed and one officer and forty-two men wounded, evidence of the sharp fighting they must have had when engaged in clearing the heights. Sir William Cope writing of the skirmish at Ferrol says “Of this, the first affair in which the Regiment was engaged, it may be observed that it has the high honour of having shed its first blood before its actual embodiment, and while it consisted only of detachments experimentally assembled for instruction. It was the only corps engaged on the day of disembarkation and (with the exception of one officer of the 52nd) the only officers wounded were attached to it. 25 August, the day on which it was

¹ Dundas to Pulteney, 31 July; Pulteney to Dundas, 27 August 1800. Fortescue, iv., 790.

first engaged, was the date of the Commissions of its first officers when it was formally embodied." It is therefore with justifiable pride that the Rifle Brigade ever view 25 August as their natal day.

After the landing at Ferrol in August the British Expedition proceeded to Vigo with a view to attack that place ; but at the last moment the attack was countermanded, and the fleet sailed for Gibraltar, arriving there on 19 September. On 24 October orders were sent out from England for the troops composing the Expedition to be divided, Sir Ralph Abercromby to take command of the men enlisted for "General service," and Sir James Pulteney to take over those enlisted for "limited service" (*i.e.*, for Europe only) and to proceed to Portugal. The reasons for this order were the projected operations to oust the French from Egypt. Sir Ralph Abercromby thereupon proceeded to Minorca and thence to Malta and Marmorice where the Expeditionary force for service in Egypt was assembling.

On 1 November H.M.S. *Tourterelle*, a 28-gun frigate, took on board at Gibraltar 158 men attached to the Rifle Corps. These were the "effectives" remaining out of the 170 which had embarked with Stewart for Ferrol. The *Tourterelle* sailed on the following day, arrived on 9 November at Port Mahon, where she landed seven sick and wounded men and proceeded on 21 November to Malta.¹ On arrival at Malta early in December orders were received from the Commander-in-Chief for all officers and men of the Experimental Corps of Riflemen whose Regiments formed part of the Expedition to rejoin them and for the remainder to be attached to different corps. Under this order Captain Gardner and his detachment rejoined the 2nd Battalion Royals, Captain Hamilton rejoined the 27th, Captain Travers, Lieutenant John Stewart and Ensign Cotter the 79th, and Lieutenants Clark and Cameron the 92nd. Lieutenant Duncan of the 21st was attached to the 39th Regiment, since his Regiment was

¹ "Captain's Journal," vol. 1389. Muster Books, Series I., vol. 15414.

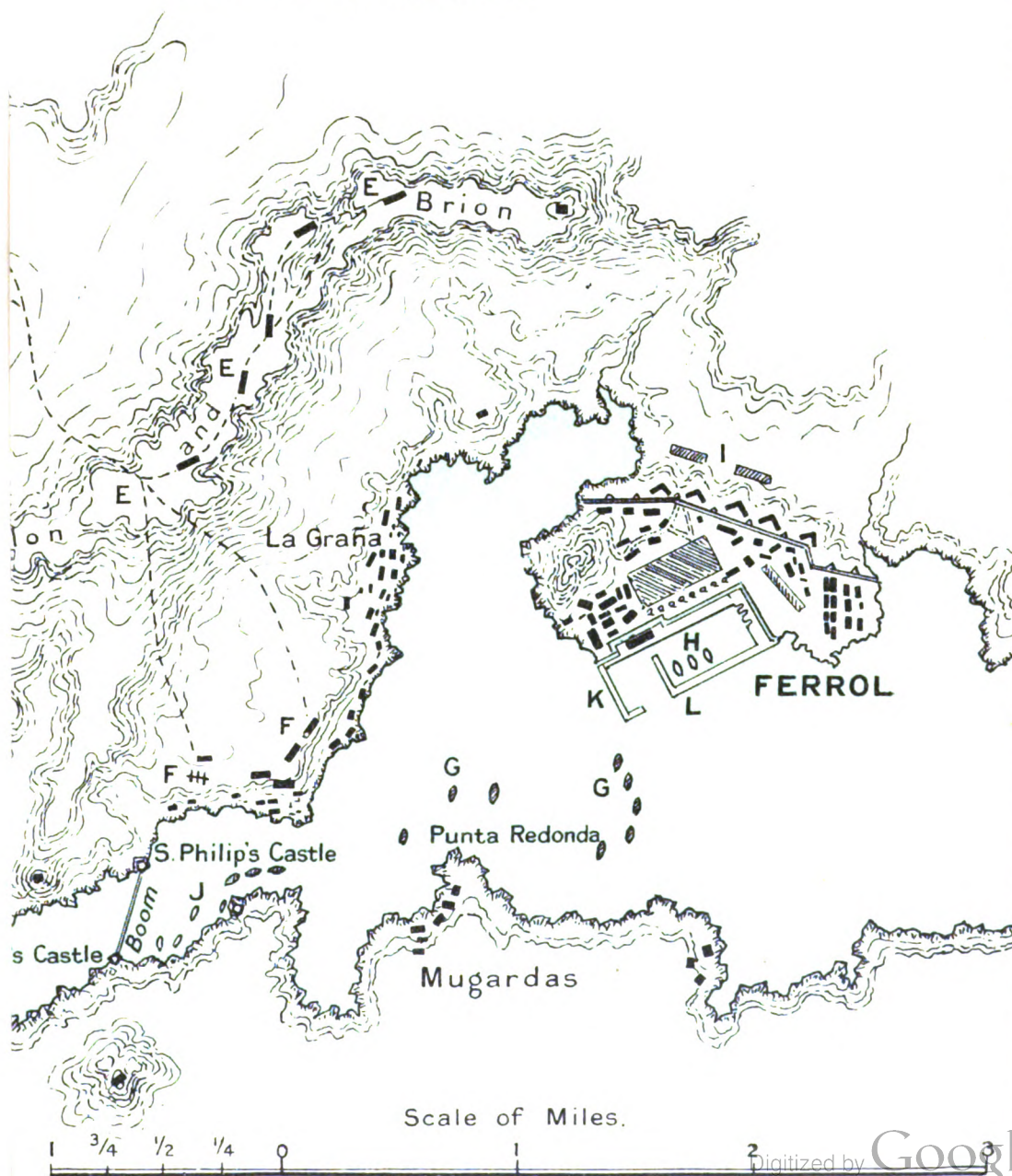
SKETCH-MAP of THE LANDING AT FERROL

25 August, 1800.

Geometrically surveyed in 1787 by Don Vincent Tofiño de St. Miguel.

The positions of the Ships and Troops are taken from the plan, published in London, 1 January, 1801.

- A. British Squadron at anchor, with Transports.
- B. Two British Frigates to cover Lord Cavan's Brigade disembarking.
- C. Spanish Fort with 24-Pounders from which the enemy were driven by the fire of the "Impetueux," "Brilliant" and "St. Vincent" gun-brig.
- DD. March of Lord Cavan's Brigade.
- EE. March of Troops to occupy the heights.
- FF. British seamen with 3 pieces of cannon.
- G. Spanish Squadron, 5 Sail of the Line and 3 Frigates.
- H. Spanish ships fitting out in basin.
- I. Spanish Troops.
- J. Spanish Frigates and Gunboats to defend entrance to the gullet and the north shore.
- K. Casemated Battery of 90 pieces of cannon constructed on S.W. pier.
- L. Casemated Battery on the S.E. pier.



not with the Expedition. All these officers took part in the conquest of Egypt under Sir Ralph Abercromby. Captain Gardner was wounded at the battle of Mandora on 13 March 1801, as were also Lieutenants Cameron of the 92nd and Duncan of the 21st. The detachments of the 23rd and 25th Regiments which formed a portion of the three companies sent out to Ferrol and on to the Mediterranean are shown as rejoining their Corps in the Mediterranean from the Rifle Corps in December and October respectively.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DRESS, EQUIPMENT AND ARMAMENT OF THE RIFLE
CORPS, 1800.

The dress of the Experimental Corps—The first Clothing Warrant of the Rifle Corps—Inaccuracy of many drawings of the uniform in 1800—The officer's Pouch Belt—The armament—Ezekiel Baker's Rifle—The experiment at Woolwich in February, 1800—Selection of the Baker Rifle—Extract from "The English Military Library," February, 1801.

UPON the first assembly of the fourteen Infantry Detachments the Experimental Corps were not provided with any special uniform, indeed the Horse Guards letter ordering their assembly expressly stated that "they will continue to be borne on the strength of their regiments and will be clothed by their respective colonels." It may be necessary to remind some who read this that in the year 1800, and in fact so late as 1854, colonels of Regiments received a sum from the public funds with which they paid for the clothing of their men.

Thus in "The History of the Gordon Highlanders," we find a Regimental order dated 22 February 1800, as follows :—

"The men who have been fixed upon to be detached as riflemen will take with them their new clothing and will immediately be set to cocking and making up their new bonnets. The officers will take care that they are neatly cocked."

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The same authority states that the 79th and 92nd Detachments formed the Highland Company wearing their own dress.¹

The first parade at Horsham on 1 April must then have presented a motley sight. The men were formed into seven companies, an awkward number. Ten of the Regiments were ordinary Infantry of the Line, and were more or less clothed alike, save for the colour of their facings. But there were four Highland Corps, the 71st, the 72nd, the 79th and 92nd Highlanders. In the year 1800 the 71st as well as the other three Regiments wore the kilt,² but presumably they were dressed in their trews for learning the art of skirmishing in the thickets of Windsor Great Forest. It is a matter for regret that no picture is in existence of the famous first parade of 1 April 1800. As to the clothing of the 390 Fencibles who joined at Blatchington during the summer and autumn, I can get no information. Doubtless they came in their Fencible uniforms. Upon the regiment being gazetted on 25 August 1800, a Clothing Warrant was issued entitled :—

“Warrant for Passing and Allowing an Assignment of Clothing to a Regiment of Rifle Men ; under the Command of Colonel Coote Manningham from 25 August 1800 to 24 December 1801 inclusive.”³

This Warrant authorized the Clothing Board “to allow Colonel Coote Manningham clothing for a Regiment of Riflemen of ten

¹ “History of the Gordon Highlanders,” by Lieutenant-Colonel Greenhill Gardyne, 1901, vol. i., p. 83. It is interesting to record that the Highland Company continued for some years ; references are made to it at Shorncliffe in 1805, and in the Peninsula so late as 1812 at the Storming of Ciudad Rodrigo. (Kincaid, “Adventures,” 104).

² That the kilt was not considered suitable for Light Infantry duties is shown by the fact that when the 71st were made Light Infantry, they were ordered “to retain such portions of the Highland dress as would not interfere with Light Infantry duties” ; among such articles was “a bonnet cocked of the pattern approved.”

Horse Guards Letter, June, 1808.

³ Miscellany Book. War Office.

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Companies.” It is of peculiar interest to all who serve or who have served in the Rifle Brigade since it shows conclusively that from the first hour of its official existence the Regiment was dressed entirely in green.

The following is an extract from the Clothing Warrant alluded to:—

CLOTHING WARRANT.¹

ST. JAMES’S,
20th day of May, 1801.

By His Majesty’s Command:—

7. ² In a Corps of Riflemen serving in Europe, in America and at the Cape of Good Hope, each Sergeant, Corporal, Drummer, and Private Man shall have annually:—

For Clothing.

A Green Coat without Lace.

A Kersey Waistcoat.

A Cap, Cockade and Tuft as above specified (viz., A Cap made of Felt and Leather with Brass plates Cockade and Tuft conformable to a pattern approved by Us, the felt crown of the Cap and Tuft to be supplied annually, the leather part and Brass plate and the leather Cockade every two years.)

A pair of Green Pantaloons.

The “Tuft,” which is so particularly specified was only a few inches long, three to four at the outside. I mention this since upon the introduction of Riflemen into our Army a number of illustrations of them were published, many of a highly imaginative nature. In the majority of these the Riflemen were represented with tall green tufts or feathers, similar in shape and size to those worn by so many foreign armies of the period. During the many years I have been collecting

¹ Book of Entries, Military and Martial Affairs, 1801. 1. e. 3. 59. Record Office. Dublin.

² That this paragraph dealt with the Rifle Corps alone is proved by the fact that an earlier paragraph (No. 4) of the same Warrant deals with the Rifle Battalion of the 60th Regiment, “In the 5th Battalion of our 60th,” &c.

and inspecting old pictures of Riflemen I have come across several, in which these long tufts have been carefully erased and painted out. It is not hard to realize that such pictures must, at some time or another, have belonged to some of our Riflemen or those who knew the Regiment well, for the persistency with which the correction is made shows the long plume was looked upon by the possessors of the pictures as incorrect. The absurdity of dressing a man in green so as to avoid observation and then surmounting his head-dress with some eighteen inches of stiff plume, so as to indicate his position when taking cover, need not be dwelt upon.

The pouch-belt worn by the officers at this period had no Regimental Badge upon it. The whistle and chain were of very much the same pattern as at present, the chain being of somewhat slighter make and attached to a silver lion's head with the words "Rifle Corps" engraved around it. The whole of the accoutrements were of black leather. The colour of the dress was dark bottle-green. The officers at first wore a leather helmet similar to that of the Light Dragoons of the period, with a green feather. They wore also a tight-fitting jacket and a crimson sash round the waist. The slung pelisse, much laced, was introduced later.

With regard to the armament of the Rifle Corps we fortunately have full information. On the presentation of the original Memorandum of Colonel Coote Manningham and Stewart referred to on page 18, a Committee of Field Officers was ordered to assemble at Woolwich on 1 February 1800 to select a rifle "for the use of the Rifle Corps."

The principal gunmakers in England were invited to attend, and rifles from America, France, Germany, Spain and Holland were produced and tried. The Committee selected a British weapon, the invention of Ezekiel Baker, a London gunmaker. The successful competitor published in 1803 a little pamphlet of eight pages named "Twenty-two Years' Practice with Rifle Guns." This book reached a tenth edition

in 1829, by which time it had been expanded to 208 pages. It contains full accounts of how the author armed the Rifle Corps, but we must let him speak for himself.

“An experiment was tried at Woolwich, 4 February 1800, by the order of the Honourable Board of Ordnance. In the year 1800 the principal gun-makers in England were directed by the Honourable Board of Ordnance to produce a specimen in order to procure the best rifle possible for the use of the Rifle Corps raised by Government There were many rifles from America and from various parts of the Continent. These were all tried at Woolwich when my barrel, having only one quarter turn in the barrel, was approved by the Committee.”¹

The rifle thus selected for the first British regiment thus armed was known after its maker's name as the “Baker” rifle. It was 2 ft. 6 in. in length, seven grooved, rifled one-quarter turn and threw a ball of 20 to the pound. It was a flint-lock and weighed $9\frac{1}{2}$ lb. To this rifle a triangular bayonet 17 in. long was fixed by a spring. The rifle was sighted for 100 yards, with a folding sight for 200 yards but it could be used with effect up to 300 yards. The accuracy of this weapon is proved by Baker having in his experiments struck a diagram of a human figure at 100 yards range 32 times out of 34 shots and at 200 yards, 22 out of 24. This rifle was loaded with some difficulty, and at first wooden mallets were issued to drive home the ball. On this subject Ezekiel Baker writes :—

“When the 95th Regiment was raised by Government, which is now called the Rifle Brigades (*sic*), I supplied them with a few hundreds of small wooden mallets to drive in the ball, but they found them very inconvenient and very soon dispensed with them. . . . The loading is performed equally well without them.”²

¹ “Remarks on Rifle Guns.” Ezekiel Baker. 8th edition, 1813, 76.

² *Ibid.*, 8, 9. This idea that mallets were necessary to drive a bullet home was revived some years later; for on 11 June 1808, after the 5th Battalion 60th Regiment received the Baker rifle, their Commanding Officer applied for “450 small wooden mallets,” giving as his reason, “this instrument being absolutely necessary in the field.” Later on he asked for “powder-flasks of the same description as those of the 95th Regiment.” “*Celer et Audax*,” 24, 25.

The Riflemen carried a horn of powder slung over the shoulder, the balls being carried loose.

In the stock of the rifle was a brass box in which were stored the greased rags or "patches" in which each ball was wrapped before ramming it home. A picker to clear the touch-hole and a brush, both suspended by brass chains to the waist-belt were also carried. Apparently the picker was sometimes slung by a chain over the shoulder. Such was the arm which was to become world-famous as the weapon of the Rifles from Copenhagen to Waterloo.¹

When the Rifle Corps was first formed a few rifles were issued to it of the same bore as that of the musket then in use, namely, 14 balls to the pound, under the impression that it would be of advantage to the Riflemen to be able to use the same ammunition as that of the soldiers of the Line, but this arm was strongly objected to by Colonel Manningham and his officers and was almost immediately done away with.² Some improvements were subsequently made in the Baker rifle, a chamber was introduced to hold the powder and a flat-bladed sword-bayonet was substituted for the triangular bayonet originally issued.

The following account of the dress and armament of the Rifle Corps is taken from "The English Military Library," February, 1801, already referred to on page 31:—

¹ In 1804 the Government commenced to manufacture their own small-arms and among them, rifles. Clode, ii., 232. In 1805, no less than 1,663 rifles were turned out, and in 1806, 3,379. Dupin, ii., 160, *note*. The Baker rifle was issued to various other corps besides the 95th Rifles from 1805 onward and continued to be the only rifle in use in our Army until 1838 when it was supplanted by the Brunswick rifle.

The late Sir William Cope often told the author of how, when he joined the Regiment in 1834, the Baker rifle was still in use. Sir William had one with the old triangular bayonet with brass hilt as originally issued, this weapon is still in the possession of Sir Anthony Cope at Bramshill Park, Hants, and bears a superficial resemblance to the rifle adopted into our Army over a century later.

² Cope, Appendix II., 516; and Baker, 8th edition, 80, 81.

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The uniform of the officers, as represented in the plate, is a jacket of dark green cloth, with black velvet collar and cuffs, trimmed with silver lace; dark green pantaloons, and half-boots: their arms and other appointments are a helmet, a sabre, and pouch, containing a pistol and ammunition; to the pouch-belt is affixed a whistle, suspended by a chain, which is used as a call to the men in performing the different movements and operations of the corps.

The privates are armed with a rifle-gun, the barrel of which is brown, and is two feet and a half in length; a sword, which may be used separately as such, or may be fixed on the rifle as a bayonet; a pouch for cartridges, and a powder-horn suspended from a cord flung over the shoulder. The sergeant's appointments are the same as the private's, from whom they are only distinguished by a whistle on the pouch-belt. They do not wear knapsacks, but carry a sort of small leather portmantua (*sic*) which is strapped to their shoulders.

The arms are of English manufacture, and no expense has been spared in contributing to their perfection. Their rifles will throw a ball, with the utmost precision, to the distance of 300 yards, and as every shot from a rifleman ought to succeed, it is intended generally to load with a greased rag, and running ball, which is found by experience to give a juster range than loading with cartridge.

All the operations are executed by the sound of the bugle, as the principal object in their extended movements is to combine the most perfect regularity with the facility of forming rapidly, at any point which the emergencies of the service may render necessary.

OF CARRYING THE RIFLE.

The rifle is to be carried in the right hand at arm's length, as in *Advanced Arms*, the cock resting upon the little finger, the thumb upon the guard and forefinger under it, the upper part of the barrel close in the hollow of the shoulder, and the butt pressing upon the thigh.

The several orders, viz., *Present Arms*, *Order Arms*, *Shoulder Arms*, *Support Arms*, *Carry Arms*, *Trail Arms*, *Shoulder Arms*, *From the Order to Trail Arms*, and *From the Trail to Order Arms*, are precisely the same with the rifle as with the musket.

(Then follow two pages of instructions as to firing at the target, of priming and loading, &c.)

CHAPTER V.

THE ORGANIZER AND TRAINER OF THE RIFLE CORPS.

The Hon. William Stewart—His early military career and services—Ensign 42nd Highlanders, 1785—With Sir Robert Keith's mission to Vienna and Turkey, 1790-91—With General Grey in West Indies, 1792, as Captain of Grenadiers—Martinique and Guadaloupe—Lieutenant-Colonel and A.A.G., England, 1795—A.G. in Quiberon Expedition—Commands 67th Regiment in West Indies, 1795-98—With Archduke Charles and Suwarrow in Italy and Switzerland, 1799—His views of the Austrian fire-lock—The joint letter with Colonel Coote Manningham—Stewart's memorandum to A.G. on discipline, interior economy, expenses, &c., of a Corps of Regular Riflemen in the British Army—His predilection for Irish soldiers as Riflemen—The Standing Orders of the Rifle Corps, 1800-1801—The Foundation of the "Company System"—Sir Charles Napier on Stewart—The Rifle Corps at Blatchington and Weymouth in 1801.

AMONG the many fortunate circumstances which combined to make the raising of the Rifle Corps such an unqualified success probably none had more widely reaching consequences than the selection of William Stewart as its first commanding officer. The story of this remarkable man and brilliant soldier can be to some extent gathered from the "Cumloden Papers," printed for private circulation in Edinburgh in 1871. His career is an example, rarely met with in our Service, of an officer who was in every sense in advance of his times, and who thus achieved brilliant success. That he did so, apart from his own sterling worth was no doubt partly attributable to his family connections and interest whereby, as was the custom of those days, he obtained rapid promotion. Added to this he had the good fortune

and rare privilege of securing the friendship, first of Nelson and subsequently of Wellington. William Stewart was born on 10 January, 1774, and was the fourth son of John, seventh Earl of Galloway. When only twelve he was gazetted as Ensign in the 42nd Highlanders. This was in March 1786. In the following year he became Lieutenant and exchanged into the 67th Regiment. In 1790 he was attached to Sir Robert Keith's mission to Vienna and European Turkey. In January, 1791, he was given an unattached or Independent Company. He was then just 17 years old. In 1792 he returned to England and was posted to the 22nd Regiment, and the following year he went to the West Indies with General Grey's force in command of a Company in one of the battalions of Grenadiers. The force assembled at Barbadoes and here it was that General Grey in order to restore "the perfection of Light Infantry attained during the American War" ordered every officer of the Light Companies to go through a course of instruction. "Thus was begun at Barbadoes the work which Moore was ten years later to perfect at Shorncliffe."¹ It may be taken as granted that this lesson was not lost on young Captain William Stewart.

Stewart took an active part in all the fighting and shared in the successes in Martinique and the reverses in Guadaloupe. In 1794 he returned to England, and being promoted Major he joined the 31st Regiment. In January, 1795, he was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel, and appointed Adjutant-General to Lord Moira's force in England. In August of the same year he accompanied, as Adjutant-General, Major-General Doyle's force in the Quiberon Expedition. In 1795 he was given command of the 67th Regiment and served with it in the West Indies until 1798 and saw more active service there. He then returned to England and, obtaining leave of absence, served with the Austrian and Russian Armies under the Archduke Charles, Suwarrow and Korsakoff in Italy, Suabia and

¹ Fortescue, iv., 352.

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Switzerland. He was present with Korsakoff at the defeat at Zurich. In his journals of this period he makes special reference to the Austrian "fire-lock" then recently introduced, and which was so designed as to "prime itself," a great advantage over the ordinary musket. It was on his return to England that, in conjunction with Colonel Coote Manningham, he wrote the famous letter which resulted in the raising of the Experimental Corps of Riflemen. About this time he also wrote at considerable length to the Adjutant-General on the discipline, interior economy, expense, &c., of a Corps of Riflemen and urged that such a body should be kept up at a permanent strength of 800 men. To obtain the necessary men, he recommended calling for volunteers from various regiments who could best spare them and also from the undrafted part of the Militia in Ireland. He further expressed his opinion (and be it remembered he had considerable personal acquaintance with several English Regiments as well as of the picked Grenadier companies of many others) that Irishmen were preferable for the particular service of riflemen, since they were "perhaps from being less spoiled and more hardy than British soldiers, better calculated for active light troops."¹

During the winter of 1800-01 Stewart set to work to organize and discipline the Rifle Corps. The Standing Orders of the Regiment which, though issued of course in Manningham's name, were probably entirely compiled by Stewart, testify not only to his capability for organization and discipline, but in a most remarkable way to his detachment and advance on the military ideas of his time. The germs, if not indeed, the actual scheme of most of the late improvements for the training and advantage of the soldier are found in these orders.

¹ Sir William Cope (p. 6) considers that this opinion is "somewhat singular." In view of the markedly divergent characteristics of English, Scotch and Irish at this period (1800) and the conspicuous and reckless gallantry so frequently displayed by the Irishmen in the 95th Rifles it would seem that Stewart (himself a Scotsman) was justified in his views. As a matter of fact, there was a very strong Scotch element in the Rifle Corps at first.

The good-conduct medal ; the medals for acts or valour in the field ; the attention given to and the methods adopted to secure accurate shooting ; of dividing men into classes according to their practice at the target, and instituting a class of marksmen ; the rules for a regimental school, and for periodical examination of its scholars ; the institution of a library ; the provision for lectures on military subjects ; tactics and outpost duties ; and the encouragement of athletic exercises. These and many other plans, carried out in the British army only after the middle of the nineteenth century, were included in the original standing orders and were adopted in the Regiment from its formation.¹ Such was the man into whose hands a happy destiny placed the moulding of our first Rifle regiment.

At Cumloden, Newton Stewart, N.B., there is the original manuscript copy of these Regulations which was used by Stewart when organizing and disciplining the Rifle Corps during the winter of 1800-01. This remarkable book gives clear proof that Stewart in drawing them up relied upon his personal experiences of Light Infantry training and the duties of Riflemen. The first paragraph runs as follows :—

“ The following Regulations are destined for the instruction of the Officers and Rifle Men of Colonel Manningham’s Regiment—they are

¹ Regulations for the Rifle Corps formed at Blatchington barracks by Colonel Manningham, London, 1801.

The Regulations apparently ran out of print and manuscript copies of them were in use. One of these is now in the possession of the Regiment and dates from about 1817, it is bound in white parchment and bears on its cover the title of “Green Book, 95th (Rifle) Regiment,” a delicate method of conveying to the Riflemen that their rules and regulations were not altogether on the same lines as those in the “Red Book.” This copy belonged to Lieut.-General Sir Benjamin D’Urban, G.C.B., and was presented to the Regiment by his grandson, Mr. W. S. M. D’Urban in 1909.

A second edition of the Regulations was printed in 1819, a third by General Lord Alexander Russell in 1860 and a fourth in the “Rifle Brigade Chronicle” in 1897.

The original book used by Lieut.-Col. Stewart is in the possession of the Earl of Galloway who kindly sent it to the writer to examine.

Colonel Stewart also published “Outlines of a Plan for the General Reform of the British Land Forces” ; a pamphlet, of which a second edition enlarged appeared in octavo. London, 1806.

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upon the principles adopted by the best organized Corps in European Armies, and are intended to open the minds of those, to whom they are addressed, to the general nature of all Military Duty, as well as to the peculiar System which is laid down for the Formation of the Regiment in question."

A few pages later on, he lays what may be regarded as the foundation of the "Company System" which it has ever been the pride of all Riflemen to carry out, and which they venture to believe has contributed not a little to their record both in war and peace.

"In a Regiment of Rifle Men, each Company must be formed upon the principle of being separate from, and totally independent of another. All the Lieuts. are to be therefore equally divided, and are never to be exchanged from Company to Company, and if the Necessity of the Service may occasionally require a Subⁿ Officer doing duty with another, he is always to return to his Original Company on the earliest opportunity."

The "Company System" may be described as one whereby Captains are given more independent control of their Companies than is usually the custom in our Army. Thus, when upon active service in presence of the enemy they are expected to use their own initiative for the mutual support of one another and in furtherance of the general object of the action, whilst in peace time they are encouraged to carry out their duties as Company Commanders without waiting for directions and orders upon every conceivable subject.

The final paragraph of this book is of considerable historic value to all those who are connected with the Regiment or who take an interest in the methods by which Stewart sought to inculcate this new departure from the time-honoured methods of the British Army into the first Regiment of British Riflemen.

"The System which has been here laid down will, with the approbation of the Colonel, be carried into effect on the 18th day of January, His Majesty's birthday, on which day the Rifle Corps will have its first clothing and it is expected that by the 18th day of the ensuing Month of March, or two complete Months from the first commencement of the

System, every particle of instruction, which has been detailed with much pains and precision, will be most fully acted up to and implicitly Observed by all Officers and Soldiers of Colonel Manningham's Regiment of Rifle Men.

"Read at the head of the Corps [by me]¹

"On the 2nd, 5th, 6th, and 7th of Dec^r, 1800.

" Blatchington Barracks,
" Sussex."

"(Signed) William Stewart,
" Lt. Col.

Sir Charles Napier, who was appointed to a lieutenancy in the Rifle Corps, 25 December 1800, and joined it at Blatchington, bears high testimony in his letters to his family to Stewart's ability in organizing the Corps, though he seems not to have liked him, and eventually to have quarrelled with him.

"Stewart makes it a rule to strike at the heads. With him the field officers must first be steady, and then he goes downwards; hence the privates say: 'We had better look sharp if he is so strict with the officers.'"²

But elsewhere, Charles Napier makes it clear enough that the early days of the Rifle Corps in the south of England were the reverse of exhilarating. From August 1800 to April 1801 they were at Blatchington Barracks, a collection of wooden huts at a small hamlet on the bleak Downs near Seaford. Seaford itself was nothing but a small fishing village at this period, cut off from the world by the Downs on one side and the marshes of the Ouse on the other.

In June the Corps now 539 strong, marched to Weymouth Camp, which must have afforded an agreeable change to all ranks. Here they remained until September when they returned to Blatchington. But the training of the Riflemen in 1801 was, as in the preceding year, interrupted by the despatch of a strong detachment on active service.

¹ The words "by me" are added in Colonel Stewart's own handwriting.

² "Life of Sir C. J. Napier," i., 19.

CHAPTER VI.

NELSON AND COPENHAGEN, 1801.

The Armed Neutrality—The Baltic Expedition—Colonel William Stewart selected to command the Troops—Detachment of the Rifle Corps embarks—Arrival of the Fleet off Copenhagen—Sir Hyde Parker and Nelson reconnoitre the enemy's dispositions—Nelson is entrusted with the attack—Distribution of the soldiers among his line-of-battle ships—His general plan of attack—The commencement of the Battle—Extracts from Stewart's Diary and Letters—The famous Signal—Nelson's blind eye—His letter to "The Brothers of Englishmen, the Danes"—The British Fleet withdraws—Losses in the Action—Nelson's Letters to Stewart—Medals for Copenhagen.

THE events which led up to the sanguinary naval battle of Copenhagen were as follows. The Baltic States—Russia, Sweden, Denmark and Prussia—had in December 1800, mainly owing to pressure from Napoleon, renewed the compact known as the Armed Neutrality whereby they pledged themselves afresh to resist Great Britain's methods of dealing with neutrals at sea. It was an ancient quarrel, and the British Government, finding their hands tolerably free for the moment, determined to put a stop forthwith to the pretensions of the Armed Neutrality, favouring as they did Napoleon's schemes for excluding British trade from the Continent. Neither side formally declared war but there was some hard fighting all the same. See Map II., p. 66.

A powerful Fleet, under Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, was despatched to the Baltic, Nelson going as second-in-command. The general idea was to destroy the Danish Fleet and then to proceed to Revel and do

the same to the Russian Fleet there. The destruction of the Danish Fleet at Copenhagen has justly been styled the most difficult of Nelson's undertakings, and at the same time one of his greatest achievements. It was the great good fortune of the Rifle Corps to be present at this famous naval operation, and it was doubly their good fortune that placed their Commanding Officer and a detachment of Officers and Riflemen on board Lord Nelson's own Flagship. It is universally admitted that by far the best account of the memorable battle is that written by William Stewart. Hence, although the story is known all the world over, I shall give it here in Stewart's own words.¹ The occasion was in every sense an historic one for Riflemen. True, the Regiment had already received its baptism of fire at Ferrol but it now won the first "Honour" ever granted to British Riflemen, and they sealed the diploma with their blood on April 1801, when they trod the same deck with the immortal Nelson in the tremendous contest before Copenhagen.

William Stewart was only in his twenty-seventh year when he had commanded the Corps in the Ferrol Expedition, and less than six months later, in February 1801, before indeed he had recovered from his severe wound received on 25 August 1800, he was selected for a command which was destined not only to shed glory on him and the Rifle Corps but was to secure for him the close personal friendship, and for the Regiment the unqualified approval, of Lord Nelson. Stewart's command consisted of the 49th Regiment and a detachment of the Rifle Corps. The Officer selected to command the detachment of Riflemen was Captain Thomas Sidney Beckwith who, with 2 First-Lieutenants, 1 Second-Lieutenant, 5 Sergeants, 2 Buglers, 1 Armourer and 101 Rank and File embarked on 28 February, at Portsmouth on board H.M.S. *St. George* bearing Nelson's flag. On arrival at

¹ Journal of The Baltic Expedition, by Colonel Stewart. Cumloden Papers.

Yarmouth Roads, the right platoon (half-company) was shifted to H.M.S. *London*, the flag-ship of Sir Hyde Parker.

All the world has read about the Battle of Copenhagen. But few people realize the desperate nature of the venture ; or the superb skill and seamanship, combined with splendid fighting tactics, shown by our Admiral on this memorable occasion. The risks were vastly increased by the necessity to manœuvre a fleet under sail in narrow and tortuous channels surrounded by dangerous shoals.

On 12 March Sir Hyde Parker sailed for the Baltic. His Fleet consisted of twenty ships-of-the-line and two fifty-gun ships, six frigates, seven sloops of war, some brigs, cutters and fire-ships and seven bomb-vessels.¹ On the 19th the whole Fleet was assembled off the northern point of Denmark and on the afternoon of the 26th it anchored in the Sound, five miles north of Copenhagen. Admiral Parker and Nelson went in a schooner to reconnoitre the defences, which were found to be very formidable. The general line of defence of the Danes was a series of floating Batteries, mostly hulks without masts anchored close in to the Flats and flanked on the north by the powerful Trekroner Battery and the smaller Lynetten Battery, constructed on two contiguous artificial islets.² The Trekroner mounted no less than 66 guns, namely one 96-pounder carronade, thirty-five 38-pounders and thirty 24-pounders and was provided with three furnaces to heat cannon balls. The Lynetten was reported to have about 20 guns. In the channel behind these forts were two line-of-battle ships, two more hulks, and a frigate. Nelson, seeing that the left of the Danish line was infinitely the stronger, suggested that a squadron of the lighter line-of-battle ships with the frigates and bomb-vessels should be sent by the channel east of an extensive shoal known as the Middle Ground so as to attack the right of the Danish line. He offered to lead this attack from the south in person.

¹ Stewart's Journal. Cumloden Papers, 2, 3.

² Styled by the British, "The Crown Islands."

Sir Hyde Parker eventually agreed to the scheme and arranged that when Nelson should engage the enemy, he would make a demonstration from the north with his heavier ships. Lord Nelson shifted his Flag from the *St. George* to a lighter ship, the *Elephant* 74, on the evening of the 26th; Colonel Stewart with Captain Beckwith and his Riflemen accompanying him. The remainder of the Riflemen under the Adjutant, Lieutenant Grant, were moved from Sir Hyde Parker's Flagship to the *Isis*, 50. The Companies of the 49th were divided among the other line-of-battle ships. The total strength of the military force was about 850 strong all ranks.

To pass through the Outer Deep Channel, in accordance with Nelson's scheme, required a northerly wind, but to get out of the position he proposed to take up in the King's Channel, a southerly wind was necessary.

Before seven on the morning of 1 April, Nelson went on board the *Amazon* frigate, Captain Riou, taking Stewart with him, and stood through the Outer Deep Channel sounding it and reconnoitring the enemy's positions. He then returned and reported to Admiral Parker, who had decided to retain his eight heaviest ships and to give Nelson twelve ships-of-the-line and six frigates. With these Nelson set sail at 2 p.m., and with a light northerly wind ran past the Middle Ground and anchored to the south of it at a point only two miles from the nearest Danish ships. His force, including bomb-vessels and smaller craft, numbered 33 sail, all told. One of the gravest difficulties was the labyrinth of shoals amid which he found himself, since the Danes had removed all buoys and marks. Captain Hardy went during the night of the 12th and examined the channel right up to the Danish ships, taking soundings, sometimes with a pole. He returned at 11 p.m. and reported the channel practicable. During the night the wind shifted from north to south.

Omitting technical details, Nelson's general plan of attack was to sail his line-of-battle ships in a column line-ahead and take up a position parallel with the Danish ships. In his orders for battle he had numbered off every Danish vessel from the south, where the *Provesteen*, a cut-down three-decker of 96 guns, was moored, which he styled "No. 1." He noted her as "a probable 74" and reckoned she could bring 28 guns to bear on her "engaging side." The *Agamemnon*, 64, was told off to anchor opposite to her, and the *Isis*, 50, opposite to "No 2," reckoned to be a "64," the *Edgar*, 74, to anchor opposite to No. 5, and so on up to No. 18, the *Infödsretten*, a 64, allotted to the *Russell*, with "a ship, supposed a bomb" numbered 19, at the head of the line, which the *Polyphemus* was to engage. One flat-boat manned and armed was to remain on the off-side of each line-of-battle ship. It was Nelson's intention, provided the men-of-war could succeed in capturing the shipping and produce any effect against the batteries, to storm the Crown Batteries.¹ Those soldiers who were intended to assist in the projected assault were dressed in full uniform and stationed upon the poop and on the gangway whence they were to keep up a fire of musketry; others in their working jackets and without their accoutrements were attached to the great guns.²

At daylight on 2 April the wind had veered to the south of east and at 9 o'clock the signal was made to weigh anchor. The *Edgar* led the line but the *Agamemnon* was unable to weather the Middle Ground and had to anchor. The next contretemps happened to the *Bellona* which with the *Russell*, both 74-gun ships, went aground on the Middle Ground Shoal. Thus Nelson's fighting strength was reduced by over a quarter at the very outset of the action, and his orders as regards the precise positions of his ships somewhat thrown out. The

¹ Stewart's Journal. Cumloden Papers.

² Battle of Copenhagen, by William Salter Millard, R.N., who was present on board H.M.S. *Monarch*, published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, June, 1895, republished in "Rifle Brigade Chronicle," 1895, 92.

Polyphemus took the place of the *Agamemnon* and the remaining ships took station short of their assigned positions so as to cause no break in the line.

For the remainder of the narrative of the famous battle I will quote from Stewart's narrative.

“From 11 until 3 p.m. the action was nearly general, and one of the most severe fires kept up ever remembered. That on the side of the British was so superior to the enemy's that Lord Nelson frequently remarked it in action to me, and foresaw at once that it would not be withstood beyond a certain time. Whenever the action began, the signal for *close action* was shown on board the *Elephant*, and never taken down until the whole was over. The action was fought, upon an average, at a little better than two cables¹ length between the two lines and to which great distance may be attributed the uncommon duration of it, together with the extraordinary nature of the Danish ships, which were without rigging, and the floating batteries, so low in the water that it was with great difficulty any impression could for a long while be made on them. After the first two hours, or about 1 o'clock, the enemy's line began to strike, and some ships to be either towed off, or to make sail on such stumps or (jury masts?²) as they had. Many (of the ships?²) continued the action till nearer 3 o'clock, particularly the northern end of the line. About half past two o'clock, the *Dannebrog*, 74, which was opposed to the *Elephant*, was found to have struck, and to be on fire. Her colours were lowered and hoisted several times, owing to the dissensions on board, between the Captain who would not strike and the soldiers who would insist on so doing. No. 14 continued his fire still longer, and actually did the *Elephant* more damage than the line-of-battle ship. She proved afterwards to be the *Charlotte Amelia* floating Battery mounting 22 beautiful brass 24 pounders. As our ships approached the northern end of the line, their position became considerably nearer to the enemy than at the southern, they being placed in rather a convex form from their own shore. The Crown Islands also became a most formidable point of fire,

¹ 1 Cable = 100 fathoms. 2 cables are therefore 400 yds., or under a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile.

² Illegible in original.

when our three ships were no longer there to encounter them, and the consequence was that Captain Riou's Division was ordered to retire, by signal from Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, having sustained considerable damage, and liable, had they remained, to have been totally destroyed under so superior a fire as the enemy now had in their power to throw on them. Admiral Sir Hyde Parker's squadron got under weigh at the same time as our division engaged . . . and was cruising about two leagues on our starboard beam during the battle.

"About one o'clock, the signal 39 (for leaving off action) was reported flying on board the *London*."¹

It was now that the famous incident occurred which has been handed down by Stewart to all ages. I make no apology for repeating an oft-told tale. The fact that the account is written by a Rifleman who had the rare privilege of being with Nelson and hearing the historic words spoken, is sufficient excuse.

"Nelson was sometimes much animated, and at others heroically fine in his observations. A shot through the mainmast knocked a few splinters about us. He observed to me with a smile, 'It is warm work, and this day may be the last to any of us at a moment,' and then, stopping short at the gangway, he used an expression never to be erased from my memory and said with emotion: 'But mark you, I would not be elsewhere for thousands.' . . . When the signal No. 39 was made, the Signal Lieutenant reported it to him. He continued to walk and did not appear to take notice of it. The lieutenant meeting his Lordship at the next turn asked 'whether he should repeat it?' Lord Nelson answered, 'No, acknowledge it.' On the officer returning to the poop, his Lordship called after him, 'Is No. 16 (For Close Action) still hoisted?' The lieutenant answered in the affirmative. Lord Nelson said 'Mind you keep it so.' He now walked the deck considerably agitated, which was always known by his moving the stump of his right arm. After a turn or two, he said to me, in a quick manner. 'Do you know what's shown on board the Commander-in-Chief, No. 39?' On asking what it meant, he answered, 'Why to leave off action.' 'Leave off action,' he repeated and then added with a shrug, 'Now

¹ This was the signal which had caused Capt. Riou to withdraw from his unequal contest with the Trekroner Battery and ships at the head of the line.

damn me if I do!’ He also observed, I believe to Captain Foley, ‘You know, Foley, I have only one eye—I have a right to be blind sometimes!’ and then with an archness peculiar to his character, putting the glass to his blind eye, he exclaimed, ‘I really do not see the signal.’ This remarkable signal was therefore, only acknowledged on board the *Elephant*, not repeated. . . . He on the contrary at the very time observed that he was determined to ‘give it them until they should be sick of it: and that if three hours would not do, he would be responsible that four hours’ such fire as we were then keeping up would do for them.’ . . .

“As soon as the *Dannebrog* was reported on fire, and the greater part of the enemy’s line, as far as No. 19, struck, or made off, Lord Nelson, having received the various reports of our ships and their being unable to get the three line-of-battle ships forward to the head of the line—and also, finding that the enemy’s batteries on shore much incommoded us, either in taking possession of our prizes, or in permitting our fleet to retire from their present anchorage, resolved to push his advantages no further. He therefore repaired to the *Elephant*’s stern-gallery, and drew out the following letter to the King of Denmark, which perhaps for style, ingenuity, and presence of mind, is unparalleled.

“Lord Nelson has directions to spare Denmark, when no longer resisting but if the firing be continued on the part of Denmark, Lord Nelson will be obliged to set on fire all the floating batteries he has taken, without having even the power of saving the brave Danes who have defended them.” This letter he sealed with his largest seal, with wax, and addressed :—

“To the Brothers of Englishmen—The Danes,” and sent on shore by Captain Thesiger.

To this the Crown Prince of Denmark sent a reply asking the particular object of Nelson’s sending the flag of truce. Nelson’s answer in writing was as follows :—

“Lord Nelson’s object in sending a flag of truce is humanity; he therefore consents that hostilities shall cease till Lord Nelson can take his prisoners out of the prizes, and he consents to land all wounded Danes and to burn and remove his prizes.”

Stewart describes how the firing on both sides continued during the passing of the first flag of truce but grew fainter by degrees and

after the Crown Prince's reply was sent, ceased altogether, first on the side of the enemy and then on ours. Nelson now made the signal to get under weigh and started out to sea. In this manœuvre, both the *Elephant* and *Defiance* grounded but were got off subsequently as were the three which grounded at the beginning of the action. Thus ended a fight which has been well described as being "second in importance to none which Nelson ever gained, whilst the severity of the resistance, and in the attendant difficulties to be overcome, the battle itself was the most critical of all in which he had been engaged." It is significant to read that "Nelson's ships had suffered more than in any other battle he had ever fought."¹

Nelson in his famous dispatch after the Battle wrote: "The Honourable Colonel Stewart did me the favour to be on board the *Elephant*: and himself, with every officer and soldier under his orders, shared with pleasure the toils and dangers of the day. The loss in such a battle had naturally been very heavy."

Some of our Riflemen were employed in working the big guns under their officers. Lieutenant J. Grant, the Adjutant, a Sergeant and two Riflemen were killed, and five others were badly wounded, some of whom died. It may be mentioned that Grant was the first British Rifle officer killed in action.

Stewart in a letter to Colonel Brownrigg² dated 5 April says:—"Lieutenant Grant of the Rifle Corps having been killed whilst gallantly fighting the quarter-deck guns of H.M. ship *Isis*, I beg leave particularly to recommend to H.R. Highness the Commander-in-Chief's protection, for the successor to Lieutenant Grant's, 1st Lieutenancy in the Rifle Corps, 2nd Lieutenant Prendergast, who commanded a division of the Rifle Company with great spirit during the remainder of the action."

¹ Mahan, 487, 488.

² Military Secretary to H.R.H. The Duke of York.

How severe were the losses in some ships is testified by those of the *Monarch*, the ship which took up the billet Nelson had selected for his own ship. Her Captain was killed and along her main deck at one period, "there was *not a single man standing*, the whole way from the mainmast forward, a district containing eight guns a side, some of which were run out ready for firing ; others lay dismounted, and others remained as they were after recoiling."¹ It would be difficult to describe in fewer or more telling words the desperate conditions attending close action in a line-of-battle ship in Nelson's time. On the *Elephant* were killed 1 Naval Officer, also Captain James Bowden of the Cornwall Miners who was a Volunteer with the Rifle Corps, 27 Seamen and Marines, whilst 9 Seamen and Marines and 2 Riflemen were wounded. On the *Isis*, in addition to Lieutenant Grant, 4 Naval Officers, 22 Seamen, 4 Marines and 2 Riflemen were killed and 4 Officers, 69 Seamen, 13 Marines and 2 Riflemen were wounded. The losses in Lord Nelson's Fleet were altogether : 20 Officers, 234 Seamen, Marines and Soldiers killed and 48 Officers, 641 Seamen, Marines and Soldiers wounded, making a grand total of 943 casualties. After the battle Admiral Parker lightened his heavy ships and sailing over the Middle Ground Shoals anchored in Kjöge Bay, 20 miles south-west of Copenhagen.

The truce with the Danes was prolonged from day to day, and on 9 April a cessation of hostilities for 14 weeks was agreed upon, Denmark during the period to suspend taking part in the Armed Neutrality and not to prepare her ships for war. The British Fleet to victual in all Danish ports. Owing to delays of our Cabinet, our Fleet was not permitted at once to proceed up the Baltic. On 25 April Admiral Parker was superseded and Nelson given command. He at once weighed anchor and sailed for Revel. But

¹ W. S. Millard, R.N., in *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1895.

when he got there the Russian Fleet was gone and the game was up. Eventually Russia gave up all the British Merchantmen upon which she had placed an embargo, the Northern Confederacy was broken up and a peace concluded with Russia. Towards the end of June Nelson returned to England. Colonel Stewart and his Riflemen were with him throughout his Baltic Cruise, and rejoined the Rifle Corps at Weymouth in the month of July, 1801.

Upon Lord Nelson's dispatches and Colonel Stewart's report on the battle reaching headquarters in London, the Duke of York caused the following letter to be written to Stewart :—

HORSE GUARDS,
22 April 1801.

SIR,—I have had the honour to lay your letter of the 5th inst. before the Commander-in Chief, together with its enclosure, being a return of the killed and wounded of the troops under your command, in the action sustained by H.M. fleet off Copenhagen on the 24th of this month, and I have his Royal Highness' commands to express his fullest approbation of the gallantry and good conduct displayed by the officers and soldiers of the 49th Regiment and detachment of the Rifle Corps on that memorable occasion, and which is spoken of in such high terms by Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson, who commanded the division of the fleet on board which they served ; and His Royal Highness desires that his thanks may be communicated to the officers and soldiers accordingly.

To you in particular, I have His Royal Highness' directions to acquaint you that His Majesty has been graciously pleased to promote you to the rank of Colonel, as a special mark of his royal approbation.

I have the honour, &c.

Hon. Colonel Stewart.

ROBERT BROWNRIGG.

But in addition to this approval from the Commander-in-Chief, the thanks of the Houses of Parliament were given to Admiral Parker, Lord Nelson and Colonel Stewart in the following terms.

Resolved, *nem. diss.*, That the Thanks of this House be given to Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, for the able and judicious disposition made by him of the Force under his command, by which the Danish

Ships of War forming the Line of Defence of the Harbour of Copenhagen were taken and destroyed, on the 2nd of April 1801.

Resolved, *nem. diss.*, That the Thanks of this House be given to Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson, K.B. ; Rear-Admiral Graves, and Colonel Stewart, commanding his Majesty's 49th Regiment of Foot, and a Corps of Riflemen ; and to the several Captains and Officers of the Fleet under the command of Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, for their bravery and gallant conduct on the said most glorious occasion ; and that Admiral Parker do signify the same to them, &c.¹

How highly Nelson thought of Stewart's services is evidenced by a memorandum in his own handwriting, written about July 1802, to his agent, Alexander Davidson, in which he urges that "as a mark of the high sense of the services of the Honourable Colonel Stewart and the Army," those concerned should "agree to give up a proportion of the Admirals' one-eighth of the prize-money, equal to that of a Junior Flag-Officer," and that "the Field Officers and the other classes ought to share according to their rank in the Navy."

From the day of Copenhagen a warm friendship sprang up between Nelson and Stewart. Nelson, with characteristic enthusiasm, writing to Lord St. Vincent a week after the battle says "I cannot let Colonel Stewart part from me without assuring you of my perfect esteem for his character in every respect." After the reconnaissance of Revel, he again writes on 22 May, "I send you a plan of the Bay of Revel, drawn by our friend, Colonel Stewart, who is an excellent and indefatigable young man, and depend upon it, the rising hope of our army." Writing to Stewart himself, in July, he says, "Believe me, I shall for life feel proud in having formed your acquaintance." And again in August 1801, "I should rejoice, my dear Colonel, that we could be employed

¹ *Lords' Journals*, vol. xliii., 101.

Commons' Journals, vol. lvi., 285.

on some joint expedition and that time I hope, must come, for the commanding officers of the two services, to make the service easy and pleasant, should have most perfect confidence in each other." A few weeks later, the Peace of Amiens, so-called, was patched up and the Nation, sick of the incessant warfare of the last eight years, welcomed it with more exuberance than dignity. Not so Nelson. On 10 October, 1801, he writes an eminently characteristic letter :—

"My dear Stewart,—Your letters are like yourself always kind, affectionate, and friendly. . . . We have had two good opportunities of knowing each other—sailing together and fighting together. . . . I dislike all these childish rejoicings for peace. It is a good thing I hope, but I would burst before I would let a damned rascal of a Frenchman know that either peace or war affected me with either joy or sorrow. . . . I hope the Government will increase your Rifle Corps. Although it is peace we must always be on our guard against Corsican treachery ingrafted upon French infamy. Damn them all ! is the constant prayer of, my dear Stewart,

"Your most obliged and affectionate Friend,

"NELSON AND BRONTE."

Nelson's interest in the Rifle Corps and its training was unabated. In April 1803, he wrote to Stewart discussing the prospects of war and averring that "whilst Bonaparte lives he will never be quiet" and adds "I long to see your Regiment upon service."

In the Records of the 1st Battalion it is stated that "an appropriate medal was issued on this occasion by Admiral Lord Nelson to the non-commissioned officers and several soldiers." Sir William Cope in 1874 was unable to find any trace of this medal. Certain it is that it was not given to the officers ; for in the Cumloden Papers there is a correspondence in 1820-21, between Stewart (then Lieutenant-General), Earl St. Vincent and Lord Sidmouth from which it appears that Nelson had in 1801 endeavoured to get a medal for his Captains and also for Stewart, but that Lord St. Vincent had refused it on the grounds that

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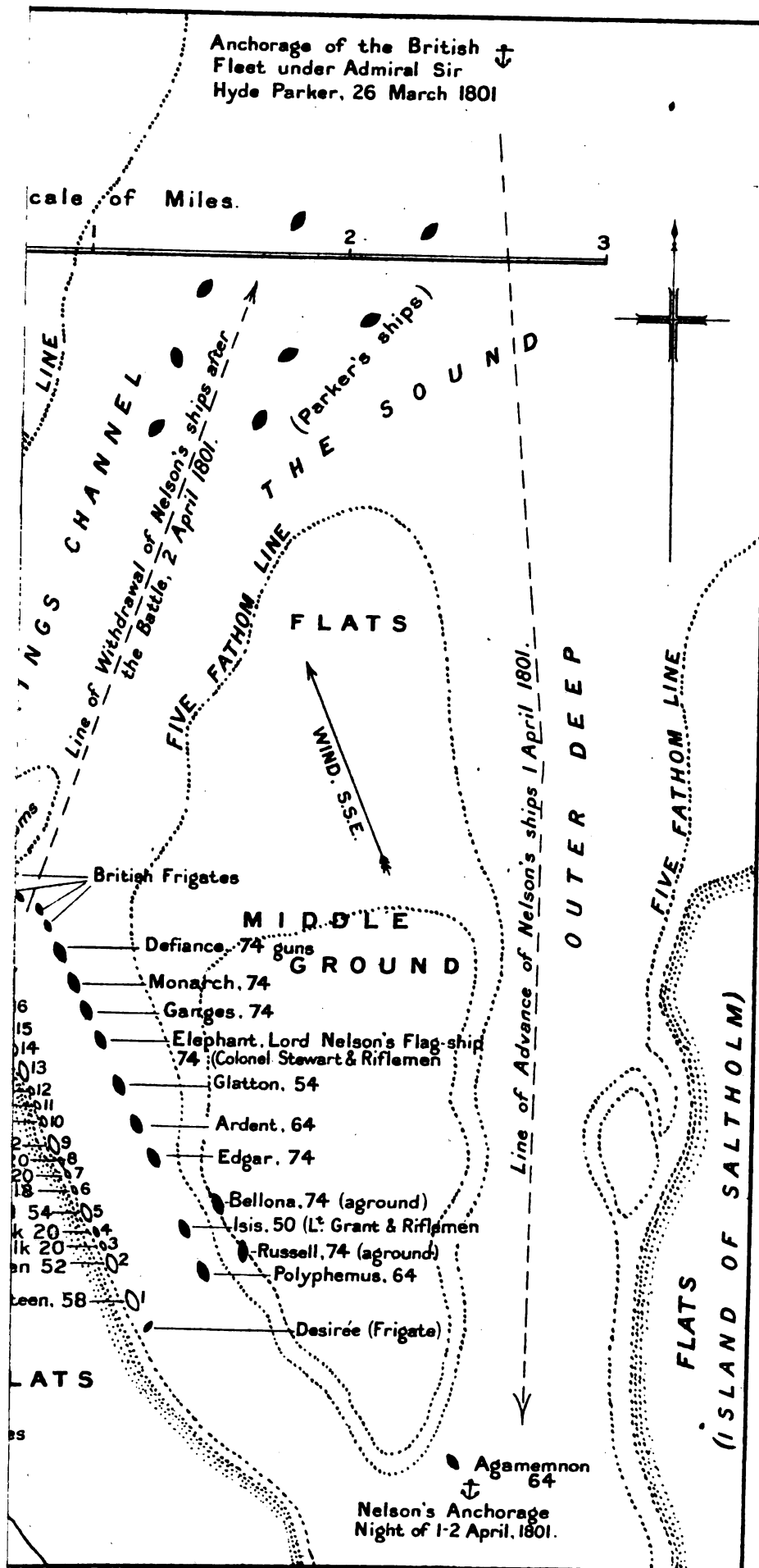
those Captains who were with Admiral Parker and were not engaged would feel it to be an invidious distinction. Stewart pressed his claim in 1821 as a military man and hence on a different footing to the Naval Captains, but it was again refused by Lord Sidmouth. The point is of interest, as showing the importance Stewart attached to having been present at Copenhagen. He was at the time well decorated, for besides being doubly knighted for his fine services in many campaigns, he possessed the Gold Medal with six bars for commanding a Brigade or a Division in six important general actions from Albuera to Orthez.

This question of the existence of any medal for Copenhagen was in abeyance for many years and it was not until 1895 that anything more was heard of it. In that year a medal for Copenhagen was offered for sale. The story is too long to repeat here and will be found at length in the "Rifle Brigade Chronicle" for 1895. Suffice to say, a silver medal for Copenhagen was identified by me as having been granted to Sergeant John Robison of the Rifle Corps, which is now in the collection of medals belonging to the Regiment.¹

Note on the Map of Copenhagen.

When in Copenhagen in the Autumn of 1912, I was given a plan of the battle by a Danish Naval Staff Officer. There is a remarkable agreement between this plan and Nelson's drawn up before the battle. Nelson in his reconnaissance counted 19 ships whereas the Danish map shows only 18. In Nelson's plan "No. 8" is marked as having "no guns visible," the only one thus described, and likely enough this may have been a store-ship or tender. The *Charlotte Amalia* is shown on the Danish plan as being moored north of the

¹Two other Medals or rather Badges for Copenhagen have also come to my knowledge, one in the collection of Mr. D. Hastings Irwin which in his opinion and that of Captain Tancred is probably one of the Copenhagen badges granted by Lord Nelson. The second was sent me in 1909 by Mr. Robert Day, of Cork. Mr. Day also had a replica of the silver Copenhagen medal first described.



BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN, 2 APRIL, 1801.

1801, and from a Danish Staff-Map. British ships shown thus ● Danish ships shown thus ○. The numerals opposite each Danish ship are the numbers of the guns. The numerals opposite each British ship are the numbers of the guns. The position of the Crown-Prince of Denmark during the action is shown by a small circle.

Sjælland (No. 16), but since Stewart definitely describes her as No. 14 next to the *Dannebrog* (No. 13) and states that the *Elephant* suffered from her fire I have retained her in that position. It is of great interest to note that Lord Nelson in his orders, gave the "supposed number of guns on the engaging side of the enemy's ships" to be 347, whereas the Danes show they had 365. Nelson's estimate of the guns on the Trekroner Fort was "50 to 70," the actual number being 66, whilst the Lynetten Fort, which appeared to be constructed for twenty guns, is shown by the Danish map as having been unarmed on 2 April 1801.

CHAPTER VII.

SHORNCLIFFE CAMP, 1802—04.

The Rifle Corps at Blatchington, 1801—Training the Riflemen to shoot—Hamlet Wade as a rifle shot—"Chosen Men"—Shorncliffe Camp—Detachments along Dungeness Peninsula, 1802—Prevalence of duelling at Shorncliffe—The Rifle Corps are numbered the "95th," 1803—Colonel Manningham's Lectures—Sir John Moore takes command at Shorncliffe—Scheme to resist a landing at Dungeness—Napoleon's preparations for invasion—Moore's "Brigade Training"—The "Volunteers" of 1802-04—Moore's views as to a landing—Extracts from the local press of 1804—Drill at Shorncliffe—The Camp at Boulogne—The Flotillas in the Channel—One of Moore's field-days in 1804 described—The *rôle* of the Rifles—Moore's system of training—Lieutenant Ewart's (52nd) notes on work in Camp—Brabourne Lees Barracks—Break up of the Camp at Boulogne—Lord Nelson's last letter to Colonel Stewart before Trafalgar.

OF life in the Rifle Corps in 1802-04 we have some knowledge, mainly thanks to William Surtees' Memoirs.¹ Surtees had enlisted in the 56th, the famous "Pompadours" in 1798, and had taken part in the abortive Helder Expedition in 1799. In the spring of 1802, when quartered at Cork, an officer and party of the Rifle Corps arrived on recruiting service and Surtees at once volunteered and joined the Rifles at Blatchington in July. From him we get a view of the Rifle Corps from within and of the pains taken to teach the recruits to become proficient with the rifle.

¹ "Twenty-five Years in the Rifle Brigade," by Quartermaster William Surtees, published in 1832.

“We immediately commenced our light drill in which I took great delight : but most of all I liked shooting at the target.” The recruits were first made to fire with a rifle resting on a “horse,” “a machine to assist young riflemen in taking aim.” The distance was 50 yards and Surtees, with the first ten rounds he ever fired with a rifle, hit the target every shot, making two bulls’-eyes. Major Hamlet Wade, himself a famous rifle shot, was in command and on seeing Surtees’ performance declared it was “a wonderful exhibition for a recruit unaccustomed to rifle shooting” and forthwith gave him 6d. out of his own pocket !

Surtees describes how Wade and a Rifleman named Smeaton “used to hold the target for one another at 150 yards, so steady and accurate was both their shooting.” This story is repeated by Mr. Stooks Smith who in his “List of Officers,” published in 1851, describes how Wade and a Rifleman named John Spurry held the target for each other at 200 yards “a wonderful feat with the Baker rifle.” Sir William Cope adds “Wade was an extraordinary, gallant, dashing Irishman and anecdotes of him were still rife when I was in the Regiment” (1834-39). There was a story that at an inspection, the old Earl of Chatham expressed a wish to see some practice with the rifle and remarked upon the danger to the markers. Upon this Wade said “There is no danger” and calling to one of the men (probably Smeaton) bade him hold the target and he himself, taking a rifle, fired at it and hit it. Lord Chatham’s horror at this was extreme ; upon which Wade said “Oh we all do it” and bidding the other take a loaded rifle, he ran out himself and held the target for the soldier’s fire.¹

In the month of August 1802, the Rifle Corps marched from Blatchington to Chatham. On the line of march, when halted at

¹ In the Pay-Lists and Muster Rolls of the Rifle Corps for the year 1802 John Smeaton is shown as serving in the “Lieutenant-Colonel’s Company.” No man of the name of John Spurry is on the roll.

Maidstone, some of the men broke open the plate chest of the Officers' Mess. It is recorded that one of the offenders was discovered and, being tried by Court Martial, was sentenced to receive 800 lashes, "all of which" says Surtees "he took at one standing and that without evincing much suffering; this was the most I ever saw inflicted at one time."

It is interesting to note that about this time Surtees was appointed "a Chosen man." "Chosen men" were Private Riflemen selected by the C.O. to perform the duties of Acting-Corporal when none such was available and were distinguished by a plain "ring" round the arm in place of the single chevron.¹

The Regiment was even at this early period a favourite one with volunteers both from the Line and Militia, and Surtees describes four men in the ranks who had been commissioned officers, one of whom was actually drawing half-pay and who was eventually recalled to full-pay as Lieutenant in the Army.

In November 1802 the Rifles marched to Shorncliffe, as we now style it, but Shorn Cliff as it was then frequently written. Although we were at peace at this time there were threats of a descent by the French on our southern coasts, and five companies of the Rifles were posted along the dreary stretch of shingle at Forts Sutherland, Moncrieff, and at Dungeness. The remains of these old forts can in most instances be seen to this day. These companies were, so to speak, on outlying piquet along the stretch of coast known as the East bay of Dungeness, where owing to local tides and the prevailing winds a landing would most likely be attempted. At Shorncliffe Camp, in reserve as it were, were the remaining five companies.

The duties of the Riflemen at this period and for some time

¹ Those who have served in the Regiment in former years will recall how this ancient custom, which originated in Colonel Coote Manningham's Regulations, was maintained until 1895, when it was somewhat unnecessarily abolished.

later were peculiarly harassing. Charles Napier¹ writing in December 1802 says : "The hospital is full of rheumatic patients and men with coughs and colds, caught from standing long on damp ground and being kept in mizzling rain for hours without moving."²

Napier who had joined the Rifle Corps in December 1800 and who later on exchanged to the 50th was not a cheerful writer. His account of his kit and belongings is characteristic of the hard life lived by many Army officers in those days. Writing to his mother from Shorncliffe in 1803 when he was appointed to the staff as A.D.C. he says : "I have no clothes but those on my back. I have indeed too many books—above thirty volumes—but books and clothes, all go into two trunks. Nothing of mine except linen will do for an Aide-de-Camp. My pantaloons are green and I have only one pair, my jacket, twice turned, a green waistcoat, useless, one pair of boots, without soles or heels, a green feather and a helmet, not worth sixpence."²

The incessant duties and continuous severe training at Shorncliffe no doubt did not improve the tempers of some and with the result that there were many duels among the officers. In August 1804, Captain C. Campbell of the Rifles was mortally wounded by 2nd Lieutenant J. Travers a brother officer. Campbell had only joined the Rifles from the 42nd Highlanders, two months before and Travers had less than six months' service. Travers and both the seconds absconded but returned and after the matter had been referred to H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief, they were permitted to return to duty in September, but Travers was gazetted out of the Regiment in December. The *Kentish Gazette* of 1804 has various references to this and other similar unfortunate affairs and in September states that "a great rage for duelling prevails at Shorncliffe, a meeting took place there on Thursday between two officers of the 52nd; after three rounds they made it up!"

¹ Afterwards General Sir Charles Napier, the victor of Meanee.

² "Sir Charles Napier," by Sir W. Butler, 16.

During this year 1807 recruits, including transfers of selected men from Line Regiments, joined, bringing up the strength of the Rifle Corps at the end of December 1802 to 32 Sergeants, 42 Corporals, 20 Buglers, and 598 Riflemen.

On 18 January 1803, the Rifle Corps was ordered to be placed among the numbered Regiments of the Line,¹ which at this time amounted to 94. It was accordingly given the number 95, a number which was destined to become famous in the history of our Wars during the next 13 years. But although thus granted the numeral 95 and being officially known as "the 95th or Rifle Regiment;" in both the Army and in Army official documents, it continued to be styled the "Rifle Corps." Thus in the *London Gazette* for 25 January 1803, the following entry occurs:—

"95th Regiment or Rifle Corps. Major Sidney Beckwith to be Lieutenant-Colonel."

Again the Pay Lists of this period are all marked "95th or Rifle Regiment of Infantry," whilst the appointments bore the numeral "95" and the inscription "The Rifle Regiment."²

In March 1803, Bonaparte's conduct had become so menacing that England, seeing that war was inevitable, wisely took the initiative, and on 16 May 1803, declared war. One of the first results of this was to cause our weak regular forces to be once again scattered along our shores. Stewart with the Head-Quarters and five companies of the 95th were ordered to march to Blatchington, the remaining five remaining at Shorncliffe and finding detachments for the Dungeness Forts as before.

England at this period was swarming with "Volunteers" which had responded to the call to arms, in view of Bonaparte's threatened invasion. In August and September Sergeants of the Rifle Corps are

¹ S.C.L.B., sub. dat.

² See "Rifle Brigade Chronicle," 1906, 80, and 1911, 18, for examples of this.

shown as “drilling a Rifle Company of the Sussex Militia at Brighton,” and “Drilling Volunteers” near Uckfield, at Dorking or in London. In November the companies at Blatchington marched to Gravesend and crossing over to Colchester were quartered there and at Warley and Woodbridge for the winter, forming part of the force intended to cover London from a landing in Essex. Meanwhile the other companies continued at Shorncliffe, and in the spring months of 1803 Colonel Coote Manningham, carrying out the intentions of his own standing orders, gave a course of lectures on the duties of Riflemen on active service. These were printed and published in the same year.¹

The camp at Shorncliffe under Sir John Moore which was formed in June 1803, was the first practical step towards organizing our land forces. The defence of the coast-line from Deal to Dungeness was confided to Moore, and his scheme of defence lay in “using Dungeness as a post of observation to give protection to ships anchoring within reach of its forts : to oppose by its fire the disembarkation of troops ; the moment the enemy are landed the garrison to retire, spiking the guns, and blowing up the ammunition. The real defence of Dungeness will rest in the difficulty of crossing so great a tract of shingle, and in the power we shall have whilst we command the sluices at Dymchurch and Scott’s Float of filling the ditches and, by cutting the dyke, inundating the Marsh and thus confining the advance of an enemy to a very few roads.”² Later, he says, “I am daily more convinced that in the present disposition of the country, if proper means were adopted, the enemy in whatever numbers he appeared, might be baffled in his first attempt, and never get beyond the beach, but if he gets over the landing without

¹ “Military Lectures delivered to the Officers of the 95th (Rifle) Regiment at Shorn-Cliff Barracks, Kent, during the Spring of 1803.” By Coote Manningham, Colonel of the 95th (Rifle) Regiment. Octavo, London, 1803, 70. They were reprinted in the “Rifle Brigade Chronicle” in 1896.

² Moore to Dundas, 1 July 1803. Maurice, ii., 72.

loss, and once penetrates, the spirit this will give him and the despondency it will cause us, will render his expulsion very difficult.”¹

Sir David Dundas was given command of the whole Southern District and Moore was charged with the double duty of training his Brigade for war and of organizing means for opposing any attempt at a hostile landing. One of Moore's first acts with reference to Shorncliffe was to urge that if it were intended to make it a permanent station, “additional ground should be assigned to the Rifle Corps.” It is very clear that he appreciated the necessity of plenty of room for the proper instruction of light infantry and riflemen in their duties. Moore now set to work to train the brigade entrusted to him. Of the 95th training we know. Stewart's promotion gave the command to Thomas Sidney Beckwith, a brilliant leader of Light troops who subsequently rose to high command. Nor were the 52nd less fortunate, they had been converted into Light Infantry on 18 January 1803, the same day that the Rifle Corps were numbered the 95th, and in Kenneth McKenzie had a leader and trainer second to none. Sir Charles Napier records how “At Shorncliffe Camp he (Moore) devised such improvements in drill, discipline, dress, arms, formation and movements as would have placed him for military reforms beside the Athenian Iphicrates if he had not had the greater glory of dying like the Spartan Brasidas. His materials were the 43rd, 52nd and Rifle Regiments and he so fashioned them that afterwards, as the Light Division under Wellington, they were found to be soldiers unsurpassable, perhaps never equalled. The separate successful careers of the officers strikingly attest the merits of the School. So long a list of notable men could not be presented by three regiments of any service in the world.”²

By the autumn of 1803, 342,000 Volunteers had enrolled themselves and had been issued arms, but little progress had been made in their

¹ Maurice, ii., 75.

² “Life of Sir C. Napier,” 1857, vol. i., 58

military training. "In the meantime Bonaparte had loudly proclaimed his determination to conquer peace in London, in other words to subjugate Great Britain. . . . Throughout the summer and autumn of 1803 every river and port from Ushant to Texel was ringing with the clink of hammers and the din of multitudes employed in building the greatest flotilla that had ever darkened the sea."¹ Bonaparte hoped at first that he should be able to make his attack during the winter of 1803-04, and such were his exertions that nearly one thousand of his vessels were collected at Boulogne before the end of December.

Looking back over a century to this time when Napoleon had his magnificent war-seasoned army, highly disciplined and organized² and 100,000 strong, assembled at Boulogne it seems almost ludicrous to contrast our preparations. True, there were nigh 350,000 Volunteers under arms, but they were undrilled, undisciplined and unorganized.

"For all that unordered national enthusiasm" writes Maurice, "Moore's Brigade at Shorncliffe was on land the shield and buckler, and it was in that confident spirit that with it he faced the hosts of Napoleon."³ It was Moore's conviction that the force he had, with this support behind it, "would drive into the sea *any* force France could send against us, or if we did not, we should leave them without power to follow or inclination to engage in such another encounter."⁴ Much as we all admire Moore's splendid courage, we cannot forget that the British Fleet was then, as now, our one and only adequate line of defence against invasion.

It is interesting after this lapse of time to read how our forefathers viewed the critical situation from day to day. The *Kentish Gazette* for the year 1804 is full of information about Sir John Moore's

¹ "Narratives of Some Passages in the Great War with France," 1799-1810, by Lt.-Genl. Sir H. Bunbury, 1854.

² Gurwood, vol. iii., 302.

³ "Diary of Sir John Moore." Maurice, 1904, ii., 77.

⁴ Ibid.

camp, with surmises as to Bonaparte's intentions and plans. The following extracts are given as they well exemplify the anxieties of those days and shed some light upon Moore's methods of brigade training and the duties expected from the Rifles in connection therewith.

13 January 1804.—Brigadier-General Manningham has been appointed to succeed Sir Charles Green in the command of the Militia at Dover, and Captain Cameron of the Rifle Regiment is Major of Brigade.

17 January.—A letter from Sandgate Castle observes that the troops in the Eastern District are continually alarmed by a very *nervous* correspondent at Deal; they are distributing ammunition, and making great preparations, to give the little Corsican a warm reception. "We," says the writer, "take it much more cool and quiet under Moore. Our preparations were made in September last, and they have neither increased nor diminished since that period; we have no restless nights; or false alarms."

Shorn Cliff Camp, 21 June.—The 43rd and 52nd regiments of foot have been re-inforced within the last day or two, by upwards of 400 men from the Army of Reserve to complete the two regiments. The ground in front of the camp is occupied from morning till night with the recruits drilling.

Orders have lately been issued by General Moore that the 95th or Rifle Corps should be practised in the mode of firing from the edge of the cliff to a target placed at the water edge.

Sandgate, 3 July.—There was a very heavy firing this morning from ten to twelve at Boulogne; which it is supposed proceeded from some fresh movement on the part of the enemy's flotilla. All however, is mere conjecture, the weather being too hazy to admit of any accurate observations being made from hence.

General Moore's brigade struck their tents again this morning for a short time, when the troops were practised in the services which they may have to perform in case of a landing being effected by the enemy. For this necessary purpose the tents are struck every Tuesday and Friday, and the disposition of the whole of the troops is of the most excellent description imaginable.

20 July 1804.—Advices from the coast continue to announce the increased activity of the enemy in his preparations to invade this country. The hostile flotillas are now regularly formed in divisions; and the manœuvres, which in immense numbers they daily practise in sight of our squadrons, prove at once the discipline they have attained, and the confidence they have acquired.

According to a letter from the coast, they were out again from Boulogne on Tuesday last when the firing was more violent and incessant than on any former occasion. About nine it seemed to cease, but at eleven it was renewed with augmented fury, and continued without intermission till near two. The necessary precautions for the purpose of alarm have been taken, patrols, signal posts, beacons, flags, &c., are everywhere used to spread the alarm; and in the course of twenty-four hours more troops could be assembled on the coast than an enemy could possibly land in the same given time.

Folkestone, 31 July.—There was a great deal of firing off Boulogne yesterday, but owing to the hazy weather we have not been able to ascertain what has occasioned it.

General Moore and his suite sailed yesterday in a cutter in order to inspect the enemy's preparations.

Sandgate, 31 July.—The firing at Boulogne yesterday was continued during the greater part of the evening and after dark the report of some guns was heard, and the flashes were distinctly seen to have proceeded from Boulogne.

Early this morning the firing was renewed, and again at noon, but the weather has been so hazy, that we can see nothing of the French coast.

Shorn Cliff, 1 August.—Our squadron from Dungeness sailed yesterday to join that of Boulogne; we have not heard the cause of the heavy firing of yesterday, but conjecture a division of the enemy's flotilla were going coast-wise to join those of Boulogne. The signal for an enemy's cruiser was out yesterday, but she got safe into harbour.

General Moore has not returned, the weather is mild and almost calm.

3 August.—Yesterday afternoon I had a distant view of the enemy's camp along the hills, which appears to have been considerably increased within the last six or eight days, and occupies

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a most extensive space; there is, however, very little appearance of troops. This may perhaps be a scheme of Bonaparte to throw us off our guard. The situation of the tents has been altered, they no longer face the sea, but are turned to the interior; so that we cannot now see the troops who of course parade in front of the camp.

7 August.—The brigade of infantry encamped at Shorncliffe under Major-General Moore had a field-day on Saturday last on Swingfield Minnis. The nature of the ground afforded full scope for the operations of this fine body of men; and their movements both in line and detached, presented a military spectacle highly gratifying and instructing.

23 August.—The Duke of York arrived from Dover at General Moore's at Sandgate yesterday, and dined there. On the preceding evening the Dungeness Squadron arrived at Sandgate Roads, close under the camp. The Squadron consisted of the *Ardent* 64, *Leopard* 50. *Leda*, frigate, and several smaller ships of war.

At 7 this morning, the troops were all drawn out. They consisted of several companies of the Rifle Regiment, of the 4th Regiment of Foot, considerably more than 1,000 strong, of the 52nd, also very strong, in numbers, of the 43rd, also very strong. These are all in the camp. The 59th came and joined the line from Hythe barracks but they are weak in number. The Rifles took the right of the wing, the 4th next them and the whole with Artillery, being General Moore's brigade, amounted to about 4,000 men. There were no cavalry. Exactly at 7 o'clock the Duke of York came on the ground. The ships of war in the Roads, each saluted him, which had something of the appearance of an assault, and the Artillery on the ground of review saluted him about the same time; the firing had a very fine effect, as the situation of the camp, a fine extensive level on the top of a cliff, is a beautiful one. The bands of each regiment saluted the Duke as he passed along the line; the regiments then passed in quick and slow time and marched admirably. They formed in column, and went through several manœuvres, one of which was very picturesque. The Rifles and Artillery advanced to the brow of the hill, that overlooks the sea, and covered the advance of the troops marching against a supposed enemy landing. The Rifles next retired behind the line, and covered the retreat of the main body. After a few manœuvres, the brigade formed on

the brow of some steep hills hanging over a valley, through which a small brook runs, hills rising on the opposite side. The Rifles lined the hedges, and fired through at the supposed enemy, while the Artillery played from the heights. Under this cover the brigade in line advanced down the hill, the Rifles retired into the rear, and the brigade made the grand attack. After firing for some time the brigade retired, the Rifles again advancing to cover the retreat up the hill. When at the top of hill the brigade made a stand and fired generally, the Artillery fired very briskly. The whole of the troops then returned to their original ground in front of the camp, when after the usual salutes the Duke of York took his leave.

The whole of the Review was conducted with greatest order, no mistake occurred, and the troops showed themselves to be some of the best disciplined in the service. The effect of the Rifles firing irregularly in front was beautiful, and in an engagement it was the general opinion it would have been very effectual. The Rifles are a very fine body of men and very active.

Few, very few soldiers of the present day are aware of how much our Army owes to Moore. Fortescue well summarizes his remarkable powers as a trainer of men, and his account will appeal with peculiar force to those who wear or have worn the Green Jacket. In it they will surely recognize the origin of that system which, in spite at times of much official opposition and the almost overwhelming difficulties created by orders and regulations framed apparently with the sole object to crush out and level down all that true Riflemen most cherish, has triumphantly borne the stress and storm of over a century of hard practical wear. Moreover it is very certain that every British officer, no matter what branch of the service he may belong to, will heartily agree with Moore's splendid ideal for making men into disciplined warriors.

“Beyond all question he was the very best trainer of troops that England has ever possessed. His system, whether applied to a single regiment, or to the Light Brigade which he made so perfect at Shorncliffe in 1804, rested on one principle, that every officer should know

his duty and do it, and should teach his men their duty likewise." In Sicily during March 1807, he inspected his own regiment,¹ the 52nd. "Their movement in the field is perfect" he wrote with pride; "it is evident that not only the officers, but that each individual soldier, knows perfectly what he has to do; the discipline is carried on without severity, the officers are attached to the men, and the men to the officers."

"It was on these lines that he trained his Light Brigade. The details of the actual movements in which he exercised them are immaterial; the essence of his training was the cultivation in all ranks of that self-reliance which springs from knowledge. Moore would not permit a battalion to depend for its efficiency merely upon the chance possession of a good commanding officer or a good adjutant. Every Colonel must be able to teach his Captains, every Captain his subalterns, every subaltern his men. He recognized that if officers are to feel an interest in their men, they must each one be trusted with responsibility for them. Once this was accomplished, the troops could be employed as light infantry, that is to say in dispersed order, the Colonel content to leave each company to its own officers, and the men confident alike in their captains, their subalterns, and above all in themselves. Though the strictest of disciplinarians, Moore encouraged to the utmost the intelligence and initiative of the individual; treating soldiers as men and not as machines; yet as a commanding officer looking most carefully to the comfort and well-being of all." ²

Recently, some notes made by an officer of the 52nd at Shorncliffe³ during the years 1803-05 have been published which shed some light on Moore's methods as viewed from below. Briefly they were based on the principle that the Brigade at Shorncliffe was in presence of the enemy

¹ Moore was at this time second in command of the Expeditionary force under General Fox.

² Fortescue, vi., 409-410.

³ Lieut. J. F. Ewart. "Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Chronicle," 1810, 189.

and that, since no one could say when or where a descent might not be made upon our south-eastern coasts, the training during the summer months in camp, as well as the routine and exercises during the winter months in quarters, should alike be carried out under this eminently realistic "General Idea." The extracts from the various orders noted by this officer all show how thoroughly this principle was carried out. By day an excellent system of visual signalling was established from the heights of Lympne, west of Hythe, to Shorncliffe and communication was kept up by means of balls and flags by day and by fire and blue lights by night, the Beacon at Shorncliffe being placed in charge of the quarter-guard of the 95th Rifles. The various forts along the coast were occupied by guards "for the double purpose of giving protection to the guns and forts and as outposts to the Camp." By night, patrols were sent along the beach and no boats allowed to run ashore without permission. During the summer months the "superfluous" baggage of the officers was ordered to be kept in the Regimental Stores. Every officer was directed to provide himself with "a small portmanteau which together with his cloak or blanket and one or two camp kettles per company is all that is to be carried." Each Captain had to purchase "a Company horse" out of his field allowance which was to carry the baggage of the officers of his Company. Frequent parades both in "Marching order" and in "Service order" were held. Marching order included "the whole of the necessities and greatcoats, and canteens and billhooks, the greatcoats to be folded in the flap of the knapsack." "Service order" included blankets and a change of clothing, the rest of the kit being rolled in the greatcoats ready to be sent to the Stores. It was an axiom that the whole force must ever be able to strike Camp, load up the pack animals and march at a moment's notice. So much for the Camp routine. When the Regiment went into winter quarters at Hythe and elsewhere, it was ordered that "the tents, blankets, camp kettles, billhooks, and entrenching tools, together with

three days' biscuit and ammunition, will be taken into Store, ready to issue if they may be called for against the enemy during the winter." During the winter months, the training appears to have been limited to route marches and tactical exercises. But there was the ever present grim necessity of watching the coast by day and by night from Dungeness to Folkestone, posting and relieving sentries and patrolling the district.

The foregoing and much else can be gleaned from these notes. But what impresses the reader most is the spirit of discipline which Moore inculcated into the Regiment. Moore insisted that discipline could only be inculcated by officers who knew their duties thoroughly and were always in touch with their men. The bed-rock of his work was an enforcement of the Company System whereby a Company was made a real command and the Captain given the full responsibilities of such a command. In this he was endorsing the soundness of Colonel Coote Manningham's system introduced three years earlier upon the formation of the Rifle Corps. But it was indeed a happy chance that placed the 95th Rifles, who had been already disciplined by Manningham and Stewart, under the enlightened influence of Sir John Moore.

Early in 1804 Stewart was promoted to Brigadier-General and given command of a Militia District. The companies in Essex marched to Shorncliffe and the Regiment was once again united there. Shorncliffe heights was no very pleasant place for a camp in the autumn of 1804. On several occasions the tents were levelled by the gales and towards the close of November the camp was broken up and the Rifles marched to winter quarters in Hythe Barracks where they remained till April, 1805, when they returned to Shorncliffe and shortly afterwards moved to Canterbury. In the spring volunteers were again called for from the Militia and many men came forward, Surtees' party alone getting between 70 and 80 men in the north of England near Morpeth. On 6 May 1805, a second Battalion was raised by the transfer of 21 Sergeants, 20 Corporals, 7 Buglers and 250 Private Riflemen from the

original Battalion, which now became the 1st Battalion of "the 95th or Rifle Regiment." The senior Major of the Rifles, Hamlet Wade, one of the first officers of the Corps, was promoted to be Lieutenant-Colonel to command the new Battalion and 1 Major (Gardner), 6 Captains and 3 First Lieutenants were promoted from the 1st Battalion into it, also the Adjutant. The ranks of both Battalions were quickly filled by Volunteers from the Militia. In less than three months from its first inception, the 2nd Battalion only wanted 7 Sergeants, 6 Buglers and 98 Private Riflemen, to complete its establishment.

In June it was moved to Brabourne Lees Barracks about four miles east of Ashford and was brigaded with the 1st Battalion. This Camp at Brabourne Lees¹ became an important centre about this period, it was situated four miles north of the Royal Military Canal and so placed that troops from it could march to the sluice gates at Dymchurch on the sea front in 2 hours or to those at Scott's Float on the Rother River above Rye in about 3 hours. At these two points, they commanded the arrangements for inundating the lower portions of the Romney Marsh Peninsula and thus confining the advance of an enemy to a few narrow roads rising above the general level of the adjacent country.

Napoleon seems all along to have utterly miscalculated the difficulties of his proposed invasion. Gradually he realized the impossibility of it unless he could, for a time at any rate, obtain command of the Channel. So it was that upon Austria entering into what was known as the Third Coalition with Russia, Sweden and England, in order to oppose Napoleon's aggressions on the Continent, he suddenly, in August 1805, broke up his camp at Boulogne and marching across Europe forced Mack with 30,000 Austrians to capitulate at Ulm on 20 October, and

¹ All trace of these old Barracks have long since disappeared. In 1887-88 I explored their former site very carefully and the only relic of the old days I came across was the key to a Barrack-room with a brass label of the well-known type marked SOL^s BAR^s, No. 2, K.

on 2 December crushed the united Russian and Austrian forces at Austerlitz.

But though Napoleon was thus victorious everywhere on the Continent Nelson's glorious victory at Trafalgar on 21 October over the combined French and Spanish Fleets dispelled all fears of invasion of these isles and left England free to use her forces across the seas wherever she listed.

Only a few days before Nelson's death he wrote from the *Victory* off Cadiz what proved to be his last letter to Colonel William Stewart of the Rifles.

VICTORY,
8 October, 1805.

MY DEAR STEWART,—You will, I hope, forgive, as many, many of my friends have been kind enough to do, my not answering your kind letter when I was in England; but it was impossible if I had been blessed with six hands, and the days as long again. But I know you will forgive me. I was surprised to find you from the sea-coast; but the promotion of Brigadiers has made great changes in the destination of officers for commands; and, in the various expeditions going forward, I can venture to believe you will not be suffered to remain. But the making of our militia and volunteers soldiers was a wise plan; and we were very near having occasion to use them. Some day or other it certainly will happen that Buonaparte, if he lives, will attempt the invasion and conquest of Great Britain. At least it will do no harm for the country always to think so, even in a fancied peace. I have 36 sail of the line looking me in the face. Unfortunately there is a strip of land between us; but it is believed they will come to sea in a very few days. The sooner the better. I don't like to have these things on my mind. And if I see my way through the fiery ordeal I shall go home and rest for the winter, and shall rejoice to take you by the hand. Good Captain Hardy is still with me, and Rev. Dr. Scott, who both desire their kind remembrances; and believe me ever, my dear Stewart, your most sincere and faithful Friend.

NELSON AND BRONTE.

Hon. Brigadier-General Stewart.

CHAPTER VIII.

GERMANY, 1805—06, AND MONTE VIDEO, 1806—07.

Lord Cathcart's Expedition to Germany—Outpost duties on the Lower Weser—Friendship of the Hanoverians for the British troops—Withdrawal of the Expedition—Sir David Baird's Expedition to the Cape—Capture of Cape Town—Sir Home Popham's unauthorized Expedition to La Plata. Capture of Buenos Ayres by Beresford—Sir Samuel Auchmuty ordered to reinforce him with 2,000 men from England—Baird sends Backhouse with 2,000 men from the Cape—The Spaniards recapture Buenos Ayres and take Beresford prisoner—Backhouse arrives and seizes Maldonado—Auchmuty's Expedition sails—Three Companies of the Rifle Corps accompany him—Auchmuty and Stirling land near Monte Video—Fighting before the town—Description of its defences and armament—Auchmuty opens the attack—The Rifle Corps head the storming party—Losses of the Troops engaged—Eleven Sergeants given Medals for Gallantry.

IT was now that the British Government, unable to concentrate its strength upon any single object, embarked on a fresh series of expeditions. They were undertaken as a rule with no clear strategical objective in view, nor were they based on any definite knowledge of the number or position of our adversaries. They had the one feature in common that being initiated with a fine disregard of all considerations of time or of distances, they all alike failed to achieve any permanent success. To begin with, in October 1805, a force of 7,000 men was despatched under Lieut.-General Craig to aid a Russian Force in driving the French out of Southern Italy and ultimately to act on the flank of Marshal Massena's army which was advancing through

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Lombardy on Vienna. A yet more ambitious scheme was planned for Northern Germany, where a corps of 25,000 men, partly British and partly Hanoverian under the command of Lieut.-General Lord Cathcart was sent to co-operate with an allied force of Swedes and Russians to clear Hanover and Holland of the French. Having effected this, the allies were to operate on the flank of Napoleon's grand army engaged at that time in its famous march through the Valley of the Danube. Truly a modest programme! Meanwhile Lieut.-General Sir David Baird with 6,000 men was directed to capture the Cape of Good Hope from the Dutch, now allied with France.

With the first of these expeditions, that to Southern Italy, the Rifle Corps was not concerned. It however took part in the second which proved abortive for the elementary reasons that its success depended upon the whole-hearted co-operation of the Swedes and Russians and the benevolent neutrality, if not the active assistance of Prussia. As events proved, Prussia failed us in the hour of need. The operations ultimately resulting from the third, the expedition to the Cape, form a memorable episode in our history, but before describing them, the part the Rifle Corps took in the second, must be briefly told.

In October 1805 the Headquarters and five companies of the 1st Battalion, under Beckwith, marched to Deal and thence to Ramsgate where they embarked in transports for Cuxhaven. The 1st Division under General Don was all embarked by 8 November, and consisted of the following troops:

5 companies of 1st. Batt. 95th Rifles,	400 strong,
1 Brigade Guards—	2,000 strong,
1 Brigade Infantry—	2,800 strong,

5,400 King's German Legion, of whom 575 were cavalry and 300 Artillerymen. General Don arrived at Cuxhaven on 17 November and at once disembarked his troops. Lord Cathcart the Commander-in-Chief with the 2nd Division of 12,000 men was ordered to disembark

in the Ems, but was subsequently directed to the Weser. The Rifles disembarked on the 18th at Cuxhaven and, upon the 1st Division advancing, formed the advance guard. The march was via Osterholz and Bremerhaven on the Weser and thence up the right bank to Bremen. On their arrival before Bremen, on the 24th, the barriers were shut, and the commandant of the Prussian garrison refused to let the troops enter; the Senate of Bremen also demurred to General Don's request for a passage through the place on account of its neutrality. However Beckwith who commanded the advanced corps was not the man to be daunted by such refusals. He accordingly informed the Prussian commandant that unless his corps was admitted he should force an entrance. This he did on the morning of the 26th, opening the barriers by force, apparently without any armed resistance. The refusal of the Senate was no doubt due to fear of the Prussian garrison. The inhabitants of Hanover were much pleased to see the troops arrive; but the reverse was the case with the Prussians who were hoping to be allowed by Napoleon to annex Hanover. The British force passed on with the Rifles still in advance, to Delmenhorst, a Prussian regiment accompanying them through the city and across the bridge over the Weser, in order to guard their magazine of corn at Bremen for the use of their army on the Weser. The British troops now took up a line of observation on the lower Weser with its right at Blumenthal and its left on Verden with advanced posts pushed forward on the river Hunte, the Swedish troops holding the line southward to Minden and blockading the French garrison in Hameln. From Delmenhorst the Riflemen were detached, three companies at Oldenburg and two under Major Robert Travers at Wildeshausen, on outpost duty. These last were soon moved back to Delmenhorst, and shortly after reunited to the other three companies at Oldenburg. Here they were welcomed and entertained by the inhabitants, and by none more than by the reigning Grand-duke of Oldenburg, who became extremely fond of the

Regiment, officers and men. In consequence of the battle of Austerlitz in December, and the powerful armies set free by that event to act against us in the north of Europe, the outposts were withdrawn to Delmenhorst, and eventually into Bremen ; and on their march from Oldenburg the Duke sent forward plentiful refreshments for the Riflemen both officers and men. They continued at Bremen until February 1806, when upon the news reaching England of Prussia having come to terms with Napoleon, orders were sent for Lord Cathcart's immediate withdrawal. Early in February, the British fell back on Cuxhaven, Beckwith's Riflemen covering the retreat. At this time 50,000 Prussians were on the march to occupy Hanover by force ! On 15 February, Cathcart's troops sailed with a fair wind for England. Surtees records how during the whole of his military career he never witnessed so cordial an attachment to the British name and character as the Hanoverians evinced for us. "Nothing was too good for us and nothing was left undone by them to render us comfortable and happy." Small wonder then that it was with bitter feelings that our army when thus compelled to abandon these good people to the tender mercies of the Prussians did so with the sincere hope that Prussia might be made to pay dearly for her duplicity.

The Rifles landed at Yarmouth on 19 February, and marched by Lowestoft to Woodbridge barracks where they rejoined the remainder of the Battalion. From Woodbridge the Battalion marched in the spring of 1806 to Deal, and afterwards to quarters at Ospringe and Faversham, where they joined the 2nd Battalion, which had moved there from Bexhill.

I now come to the third, Sir David Baird's Expedition to the Cape. Although the Rifle Regiment had no share in it, a totally unauthorized development of its objects led to both of our Battalions being actively employed in company with some of Baird's troops not indeed in South

Africa, but in South America ! Baird's original force consisted of some 6,000 men which embarked in 61 transports and on 31 August sailed for the Cape under an escort of nine Men-of-War under Commodore Sir Home Popham. Baird effected a landing near Saldanha Bay on 7 January 1806, and, after routing the small Dutch force there, marched on Capetown. On 8 January he defeated the Dutch Garrison near the Rietvlei, and pushing on, occupied Capetown on the 10th, and on the 18th the Dutch Commander signed the capitulation which handed over Cape Colony to the British.

Now it was that an unexpected development came about. Home Popham with the audacity and spirit of an Elizabethan buccaneer prevailed upon Baird to lend him the 71st Regiment under Major Pack,¹ four light guns and half a dozen dragoons and sailed with his squadron of warships across the South Atlantic to attack the Spaniards in what was then called La Plata but is now known as Argentina. Calling at St. Helena on the way, he somehow induced the Governor there to lend him 100 more Artillery with 2 guns and about 300 of the St. Helena Infantry Regiment. In military command of this little force was Colonel Beresford, afterwards so widely known as the Marshal Beresford of Peninsular days. The squadron arrived in the River Plate early in June. The original objective of the expedition was the capture of Monte Video, a fortified city on the right bank, but 100 miles higher up on the left bank lay the city of Buenos Ayres reported to be ill-fortified and ungarrisoned. It was furthermore the capital of the Spanish possessions in La Plata. This town had a considerable amount of trade and hence offered a tempting bait to Popham, who it seems had more than a common hankering after prize-money. So it was that Popham sailed up the river and anchored off Point de Quilmes only 8 miles below Buenos Ayres. Here he disembarked Beresford's little army of some 1,600 men, 8 guns and 16 horses. On 26 June Beresford

¹ Afterwards General Sir Denis Pack.

advanced on the capital and, after some desultory skirmishing, the Spanish garrison capitulated on the following day with the honours of war. Thus did Beresford and Popham at a loss of 1 man killed and 13 wounded take possession of a town of 70,000 inhabitants with fortifications mounting 86 guns.

Both Popham and Beresford when at St. Helena in April had written home reporting their audacious mission and the British Cabinet decided that the best thing to do under the circumstances would be to send out reinforcements and wrote in July saying that Sir Samuel Auchmuty with 2,000 men and stores and supplies would be sent out from England at once. Beresford after his easy capture of Buenos Ayres had at once written to Baird at the Cape for reinforcements and the latter had as promptly responded by sending over 2,000 men who sailed on 29 August.

Meanwhile the Spaniards had realized how weak and unsupported was Beresford's small garrison and made preparations to re-capture the place. There was a smart skirmish outside the suburbs in which the British were victorious, they penetrated into the city at various points but after two days fighting Beresford was surrounded and compelled to surrender. It was stipulated that he and all his troops should be sent to England, but the Spaniards, enraged at their heavy losses, broke the compact and Beresford, with Major Pack and the whole of the 71st and his various "details" were marched away prisoners some hundreds of miles into the interior. This took place on 12 August. Popham who was on board ship, having picked up a few detachments still on shore, dropped down the river to a safe anchorage, where he remained for two months.

On 13 October Baird's reinforcements from the Cape arrived under Lieutenant-Colonel Backhouse who learned from Popham that Buenos Ayres was in possession of the Spaniards and that Beresford and all his men were prisoners of war! Backhouse, after consulting

with Popham, at once decided to secure a position ashore and landing at Maldonado with 400 of the 38th regiment, he attacked with the bayonet 600 Spaniards who endeavoured to oppose him, captured two guns and established himself in the town. Next day the island of Goretti, which secured the harbour, surrendered, as well as the batteries which mounted thirty-two guns. The Spaniards fell back some miles inland and Backhouse remained here for three months unmolested.

It will be remembered that in July the British Government had written promising to send Beresford reinforcements under Sir Samuel Auchmuty. These consisted of the 40th and 87th Regiments and three Companies of the 2nd Battalion 95th Rifle Regiment. On 13 June the three Companies of the 2nd Battalion, at the time quartered at Faversham, were ordered to march to Portsmouth and embark for South America. Major Gardner was in command and the companies selected for the service were those of Captains Macdonald, Elder and Dickenson, each 100 strong.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that in August our Government decided to send a force to the Tagus including Auchmuty's Brigade. Hence his orders to sail for La Plata were cancelled. The Tagus Expedition having been in turn abandoned, Auchmuty was finally on 22 September ordered to sail for La Plata. He did so on 9 October ; but his transports were bad sailers and in an evil plight. He was forced to put in to Rio de Janiero and it was not until 5 January 1807, that Sir Samuel reached Maldonado, some eighty miles below Monte Video. His troops had now been on board ship over six months. At Rio he had received the news of the loss of Buenos Ayres, also of the occupation of Maldonado by a British Force of unknown strength. He found Backhouse short of provisions and surrounded by irregular horsemen of the mounted infantry type, against whom he was powerless.

With Auchmuty had come Admiral Stirling, who had been sent out by the Admiralty to supersede Popham who had been ordered home to explain his unauthorized diversion of H.M.'s forces from South Africa to South America. Auchmuty and Stirling decided that they were too weak to attack Buenos Ayres and that the only thing to be done, for they were determined to do something, was to attack Monte Video. Auchmuty brought out no proper siege-train, ammunition, sappers or entrenching tools. He had four 24-pounders and got what ammunition he could from the ships.

See Map III.,
p. 96.

On 13th he abandoned Maldonado, leaving a small detachment on the island of Gorette, and sailing up the river landed at a point nine miles below Mount Video on the morning of the 16th. Owing to the protection given by the guns of the squadron the Spaniards, who were posted with guns, were unable to offer any serious opposition. The British force pushed onward and seized a good position about a mile from the shore to cover the landing of the supplies and stores. The three Companies of the Rifles covered this advance and Lieutenant Chawner was wounded and a Bugler killed. On the 19th Auchmuty advanced upon the town and was opposed by about four thousand mounted troops who however offered but little resistance and were soon driven back into it; the same evening the suburbs were abandoned by the Spaniards. Auchmuty now halted his main body for the night only two miles from the Citadel and pushed his advanced party forward close up to the walls.

On the morning of the 20th the Spaniards made a sortie with about 6,000 men, the right column, consisting of cavalry, tried to turn Auchmuty's left flank whilst the left column, of infantry, attacked his left centre. The 95th, who were on advanced piquet, were very hard pressed but held on until Colonel Gore Browne of the 40th, who commanded the left of our line, brought up three companies of his Regiment and charged the Spaniards. The latter however

refused to give way and numbers fell on both sides. It was now that the Rifles and some Light Companies delivered a flank attack, upon which the Spanish column gave way and was pursued with great slaughter up to the town. Between 200 and 300 Spaniards were killed and as many taken; their cavalry column at once fell back without coming into action and Auchmuty was free to invest the town without more fighting. In this sharp affair, five Riflemen were killed and twenty-five wounded.

I must now describe the town of Monte Video which was rendered famous in the annals of the British Army by its daring and successful storm by the gallant Auchmuty. Monte Video at the time of this story was a compact town, roughly oval in shape and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long by 1 mile broad. It stood on a rocky ridge projecting into the sea which surrounded it on three sides. The sea defences consisted of thirteen well-built batteries, some of bastion-trace connected by a curtain and designed for flanking purposes, armed with over seventy heavy guns. The landward side formed a salient, the southern face being 1000 yards long and the northern about 1200 yards. The general line of defence was a stone wall 4 feet thick and 15 feet high, and at the salient was a well-constructed and designed square fort of bastion-trace with a ravelin, alike provided with wet ditches. The entrance to this fort which was armed with 20 guns and 4 mortars was from within the town over a drawbridge.

The fort was flanked on either side by 9-gun batteries and the walls between them and the sea were flanked by demi-bastions with 14 guns on the north side and 7 guns on the south. The entrances to the city, known as the North and South Gates, were near these bastions. Altogether the landward side was protected by 40 guns in addition to those in the Citadel. The walls were all in excellent repair; and the rock was so close to the surface of the ground that entrenching tools were useless. The garrison numbered 6,000 men, who although

imperfectly trained were unquestionably brave. Such was the fortress and garrison that faced the British invaders.

Auchmuty's force was slightly superior in numbers but two of his line Battalions were composed of mere youths and another was in indifferent order. He had however two fine Battalions, the 38th and 40th and a Battalion of Seamen and Marines, 800 strong. The 17th Light Dragoons were excellent, and these formed the bulk of his fighting force. Altogether he could reckon on some 950 sabres, 300 rifles, and 4,200 bayonets with 6 guns.

Auchmuty now landed his own heavy guns, also several he borrowed from the Navy which gave much trouble owing to the small size of their wheels. He cleared away the suburbs and constructed a battery of four 24-Pounders and another of two Mortars to play on the Citadel. He also mounted two 24-Pounders on the north side to try to prevent the enemy getting supplies and water across the Bay northward of the town. In this he failed. On 25 January he opened fire and the smaller ships stood in and bombarded the town without much effect. On the 28th he opened with another Battery of six 24-Pounders against the Citadel but although he destroyed the parapet he produced no effect on the main wall. He now established a battery of six 24-Pounders within 600 yards of the South Gate and by 2 February succeeded in making a practicable breach and summoned the Governor to surrender, who answered by defiance. As there were reports of the approach of a strong relieving column of 4,000 men with guns Auchmuty decided to assault before dawn of the morrow.

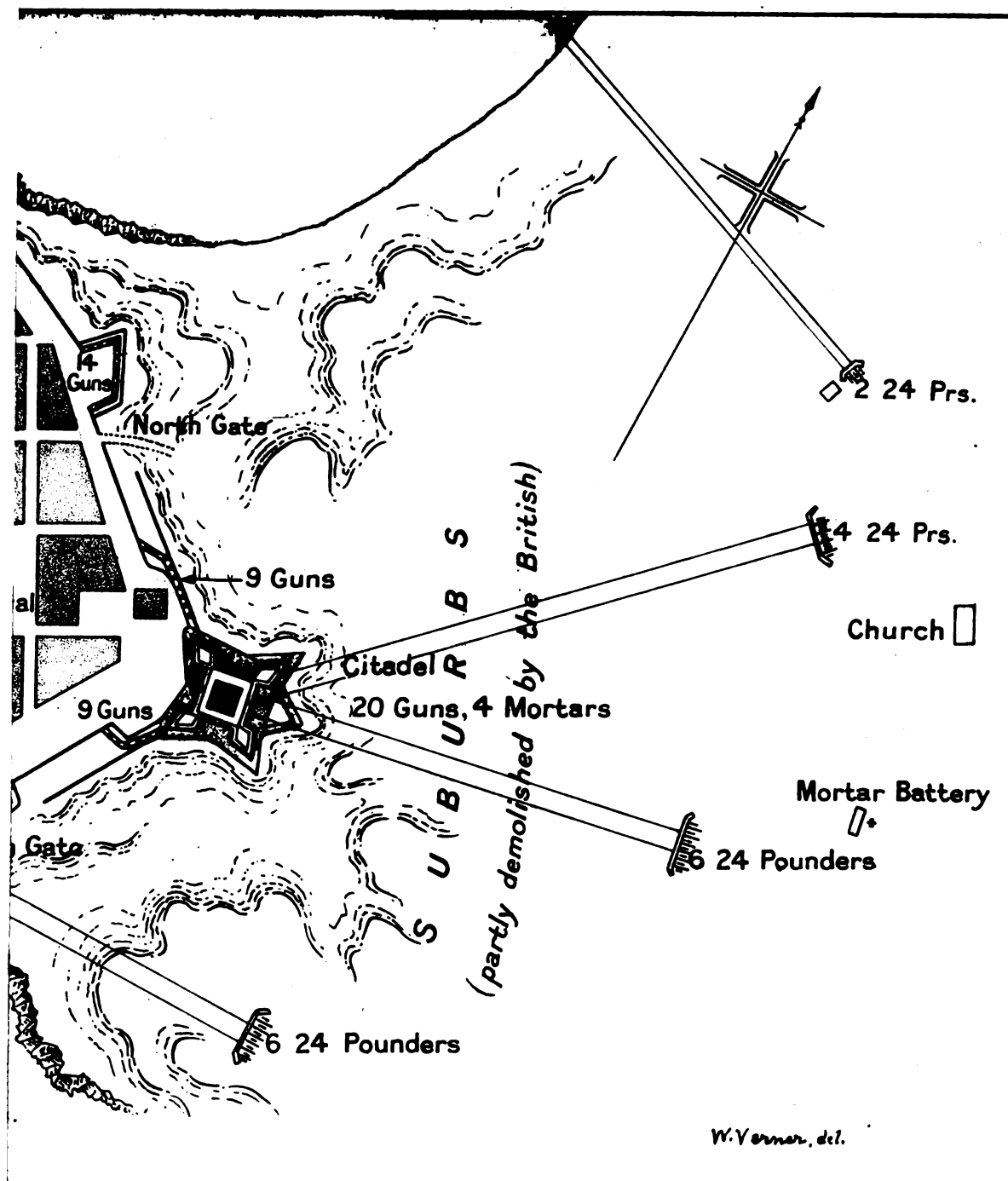
The "Forlorn Hope" consisted chiefly of men of the 54th Regiment under Lieutenant Everard of the Queen's and a Sergeant of the 38th. The Storming Party consisted of two Companies of the Rifles, and the Flank Companies and the 38th Regiment with the 40th in support. One Company of the Rifles and the 87th were sent to the North Gate which was to be opened to them by the other column. The remainder

of the Force was held in reserve in the event of the arrival of a relieving force from without.

At 3 o'clock on the morning of 3 February, in absolute darkness, the attacking column moved forward and arrived close to the breach before it was detected. The first discharge of the defenders' guns only struck one man but the next one swept away 25 out of the 30 who formed the Forlorn Hope. Major Gardner led the covering party of Riflemen, and was followed by Captain Dickenson who led the Storming Party; but on arriving at the walls they could not see the breach, and for some fifteen minutes moved up and down seeking for it under a terrific fire. Captain Renny of the Light Company of the 40th found it at last; the defenders had barricaded it with piles of hides which in the darkness had the appearance of an unbroken wall. Renny was shot dead as he mounted it. Led by Captain Dickenson, our stormers who could only pass the breach three abreast scrambled up and had to drop 12 feet into the body of the place. Some dashed into the town, others turned to their left and carried in succession the various batteries round the place up to Fort San Felipe. The 40th Regiment coming up in support also missed the breach and passed twice under the fire of the batteries before they found it. Meanwhile the second column by the North Gate grew impatient and some of our Riflemen managed to scale the wall and, forcing the gate open, admitted their comrades and the 87th. The streets were enfiladed by the fire of field pieces but these were soon captured and the town cleared with the bayonet. The Citadel alone held out but some of the Riflemen ascended the towers of the Cathedral west of it, whence they opened a rifle fire which commanded the interior of the work and the Garrison surrendered at discretion at half past eight. It is gratifying to record that although at first there was the inevitable disorder following upon a successful storm, within a few hours the inhabitants were walking about the streets as usual.

In this most gallant affair Captain Dickenson fell at the head of his Company of Riflemen, 10 Riflemen were killed and Lieutenants Scanlan and Macnamara, 4 Serjeants and 15 Riflemen were wounded. That the conduct of the Riflemen was conspicuous on this occasion is proved by their being especially thanked for their services in General Orders. Further, with the sanction of the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of York, eleven Sergeants received medals for their gallantry on this occasion. Small wonder then is it that the 95th Rifle Regiment wore "Monte Video" as well as "Copenhagen" on their appointments thenceforward with peculiar pride. The Enemy's loss was very heavy, about 800 were killed, 500 wounded and 2,000 prisoners taken, the remainder escaping in boats across the harbour. The British losses were, on the contrary, very light, six officers and 110 men were killed, 21 officers and 258 men wounded. The heaviest losses were incurred by the Light Battalion and the 38th, with whom were the two Companies of the 95th.

MAP III.



ROOPS UNDER LIEUT. GEN. SIR S. AUCHMUTY, 3 FEBRUARY, 1807.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EXPEDITION TO BUENOS AYRES, 1806—07.

Colonel Robert Craufurd selected to command—The Strategy of the British Cabinet—Conquest of Chili and Mexico considered—"The Remote Expedition"—Five Companies of the 1st Battalion Rifle Corps accompany Craufurd—General Whitelocke appointed to Chief Command—He arrives at Monte Video—Colonia occupied by Pack—The Action of San Pedro—Three Companies of the Rifles cover the advance—Losses of Troops engaged—Whitelocke's plan of attack on Buenos Ayres—The landing at Ensenada de Barragon—The difficulties of the disembarkation—Orders and Counter orders—Craufurd and the 95th Rifles with the advance guard—Whitelocke reaches Reduction—Craufurd pushes on against orders—The fight in the suburbs—Whitelocke arrives—Description of Buenos Ayres—Whitelocke's orders—The attack is made—Fate of the various columns—Craufurd's report and "reasons in writing" for surrendering—The armistice—Whitelocke's agreement with Spaniards—The British force withdrawn—The losses in the attack—Return of the Rifle Regiment to England.

THE new British Cabinet which had entered into power on the death of Pitt now embarked upon a new scheme of conquest and aggression in South America the folly of which fairly eclipsed the Popham adventure.

See Map IV
p. 106.

Colonel Robert Craufurd, a very junior officer, was given command of 4,000 men and ordered to proceed to South America and enter on a programme of conquest which would be incredible were it not mercilessly recorded among our State papers. Briefly he was to take his 4,000 men and under escort of a squadron of war-ships double Cape Horn and capture the Provinces of Chili and Peru, Spanish possessions

on the west coast of South America. Valparaiso was indicated as a desirable point to hold, after which he was to concert with Beresford and secure "by a chain of posts or in any other adequate manner, an uninterrupted communication between Chili and Buenos Ayres."¹

These precious orders ignored the fact that 900 miles of country, unknown, traversed by the great chain of the Andes Mountains, with a population bitterly hostile to England, separated the two vast regions which this paltry British force of 6,000 all told was to subjugate. To guard against the possibility of this grandiose scheme being found insufficient to occupy the time of our luckless Generals and soldiers it was suggested that it might be of advantage if we were to attack Mexico from the Pacific side with 1,000 British troops and 4,000 Sepoys from India, who might capture Manila *en route*. This attack to be combined with one from the Atlantic side with troops from the West Indies !

Craufurd's command was ordered to assemble at Falmouth. Its destination caused much speculation, and it earned for itself, with considerable justice, the title of "The Remote Expedition."

Among the 4,800 men who were eventually included in Craufurd's command were five companies of the 1st Battalion Rifle Regiment. The five companies were those of Captains Norcott, O'Hare, Jenkinson, Ramadge and Bennet, Major McLeod was in command with Major Travers under him, and they numbered 17 officers, 25 Sergeants, 10 Buglers, and 376 Riflemen. They marched from Faversham on 23 July, 1806, and embarked at Gravesend on the 26th on board the armed transport *Chapman*. The voyage was incredibly slow and was marked by delays from the first. After remaining in the Downs till 4 August they sailed for Plymouth, arriving there on the 21st. On 2 September they were disembarked ; and camped on Buckland Down

¹ Fortescue, v., 377. Letters Secretary of State to Craufurd (secret) 30 October, 1806.

until the 13th when they re-embarked; Headquarters and three Companies (279 all ranks) on board the *Chapman* and two Companies, Norcott's and Bennet's, (153 all ranks) on board the *Alexander*. The *Chapman* sailed on 28 September and the *Alexander* on 6 October both for Falmouth. Here they remained for some weeks.

On 24 October Brigadier-General Robert Craufurd arrived at Falmouth and took command of "the Remote Expedition." This was Craufurd's first introduction to our Riflemen and it is interesting to note that henceforward until the day of his glorious death at the Storming of Ciudad Rodrigo in 1812, wherever he served, he had some of the Rifles with him. Craufurd finally sailed on 12 November and arrived at Porto Praya Bay in the Cape de Verde Islands on 14 December. Here he remained until 11 January. During this time he minutely inspected the troops forming the expedition on board the various transports. The five companies of the 95th were frequently landed and exercised on the Islands. Craufurd reached Simon's Bay on the 26th and Table Bay on 23 March 1807. Here he received fresh orders to the effect that he was not to go to the coast of Chili but to the Rio de la Plata to join Auchmuty.

Almost exactly opposite to Buenos Ayres on the north shore of La Plata River, which at this point is 30 miles wide, was the small Spanish settlement of Colonia del Sacramento. After the capture of Monte Video, Auchmuty realized that he was not strong enough to attempt to take Buenos Ayres; so in April he sent a small detachment under Colonel Pack¹ consisting of Major Gardner's three companies of the 2nd Battalion 95th and some other details to hold Colonia. He also sent out small columns around Monte Video to keep the enemy at a distance and to collect supplies and horses, until the expected reinforcements should arrive from England. Meanwhile, the British Cabinet, in

¹ Both Beresford and Pack had escaped from their captors and reached Monte Video.

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view of the size of the force now assembling in La Plata, sent out as senior officer in command Lieut.-General John Whitelocke with Major-General Leveson-Gower as second in command, thus superseding both Craufurd and Auchmuty. Whitelocke sailed in March and reached Monte Video on 10 May, bringing with him the 89th Regiment, some drafts, and a Battery of Horse Artillery. Meanwhile the Spaniards were collecting a force to attack and cut off Pack's small post at Colonia and one of Whitelocke's first actions was to reinforce Pack's command to a total strength of about 1,500 men.

THE FIGHT AT SAN PEDRO.

On 6 June Pack received news that a body of Spaniards about 2,000 strong under General Elio were encamped at San Pedro about 12 miles up-stream, near the river bank. He accordingly started at 3 a.m. the next morning with 54 of the 9th Light Dragoons, 31 Artillerymen, 481 of the 40th Regiment, 247 Light Infantry and 200 Riflemen, in all a little over 1,000 men and at 7 o'clock found the enemy strongly posted on rising ground behind a deep and marshy stream which also protected both flanks. The only ford across the stream was defended by four field-guns and two howitzers.

Pack attacked at once ; the three companies of the 95th were extended along the river and under cover of their fire the main body pushed through the ford waist-deep under a heavy fire from the enemy's guns, formed up on the further side and advanced without firing a shot. The Spanish cavalry fell back at once but the infantry stood until the British were close upon them when they broke and were pursued with much slaughter. One hundred and twenty of the enemy were left dead on the field, as many more were wounded and one hundred and five prisoners, a standard and eight guns were captured. Pack's total casualties were only forty-eight, of these nearly a third were caused by the explosion of an ammunition wagon.

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Harry Smith,¹ the adjutant of the Rifles, gives an excellent account of this gallant little action. A great quantity of ammunition was abandoned by the enemy and it was whilst destroying this that the unfortunate explosion took place. Major Gardner and 14 men were badly injured. The total casualties in the Rifles on this day were 1 Rifleman killed and 2 officers and 18 Riflemen wounded.² Pack withdrew with his captured guns to Colonia after this most successful little action.

Whitelocke's force was at length completed by the arrival of Craufurd towards the end of May, although it was not till 14 June that the last of his transports reached Monte Video, thus some of his troops had been on board ship for over eleven months. Among these were the five companies of the 1st Battalion which had embarked on 26 July 1806 at Gravesend and which, under the command of Major McLeod with Harry Smith as Adjutant, were now united with the three Companies of the 2nd Battalion from Colonia.

Whitelocke had now to decide on his plan of attack on Buenos Ayres. Owing to the shoal water, the British warships could not get within 6 or 8 miles of the city and the only possible place to disembark under cover of the guns of the fleet was at Ensenada de Barragon, about 25 miles below the city. Since the preceding year the enemy had constructed batteries near Point de Quilmés (where Beresford had landed), which commanded the bridge across the river Chuelo ; hence Whitelocke's decision to land lower down. From Ensenada de Barragon to Buenos Ayres, the only practicable road in mid-winter (about June in these southern latitudes) lay along some heights parallel

¹ Afterwards General Sir Harry Smith.

² Sir W. Cope gives no account of this spirited affair. Colonel Leach in his "Sketch of The Field Services of the Rifle Brigade," alludes to it on p. 8, "as a warm action near Colonia." Colonel Gerald Boyle in 1901 sent me a copy of Pack's original despatch to Whitelocke, dated 8 June 1807, in which all the details as given here are to be found.

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to the river and some distance inland. At places there were deep and muddy streams and marshes to be passed. Two miles inland from Point de Quilmés was the small town of Reduction, and it was Whitelocke's plan to march thither and to re-open communication with the fleet so as to obtain supplies and stores before resuming his advance on Buenos Ayres, crossing the Chuelo by the first practicable ford above the bridge.

Whitelocke divided his force into a 1st Division or two Brigades under Auchmuty and Craufurd and a 2nd Division consisting of Lumley's and Mahon's brigades, leaving a garrison of 1,300 men in Monte Video. Craufurd's Brigade, known as the "Light Brigade," consisted of nine Light Companies from various Infantry Regiments and the eight Companies of the Rifle Regiment. Owing to the lack of horses, the Carabineers and 9th Light Dragoons were employed as infantry in Mahon's Brigade.

The 1st Division under the command of Leveson-Gower sailed from Monte Video on 17 June, but owing to contrary winds did not reach Colonia till the 24th. Here Pack's force embarked and after two days' delay from fog sailed across for Ensenada de Barragon and on 27th met Whitelocke with the 2nd Division standing up the river. The Light Brigade under Craufurd was now transferred to vessels of shallow draught and at daylight on Sunday, 28 June, the disembarkation began. The Light Brigade were obliged to wade ashore for a considerable distance owing to a long bar of sand, but later on a channel through it was found and the bulk of the troops landed dry-shod. Gower at once pushed forward with the Light Brigade and two or Auchmuty's battalions and at 1 o'clock in the afternoon occupied some heights four miles inland. So far so good. But now commenced the series of orders and counter-orders which upset all the arrangements prescribed for the advance. Craufurd was ordered to send four out of his eight Companies of Riflemen to Whitelocke's Division and Auchmuty

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was left with but one Battalion of his Brigade. Later on, the Riflemen were ordered to rejoin the Light Brigade.

When the main body advanced on the 29th, they had to cross a swamp two miles in width through water two feet deep, in which guns stuck and were only rescued by the efforts of hundreds of seamen and soldiers. The same obstacle made the victualling of the advancing force well-nigh impracticable. It is impossible to give here in detail the chapter of accidents that ensued due to faulty command and incompetent Staff work.

The story of the advance of Whitelocke's Force on Buenos Ayres, is well described in the diary of Lieut.-Colonel Holland who was Staff Officer to Craufurd. Since we are immediately concerned with the work of the Rifles I cannot do better than quote from this journal, more especially since it throws an interesting light on Craufurd's methods at this period.

" 29 June. General Craufurd and I rode at daybreak to the foreposts We took a Company of the Rifle Corps and went on a party of Reconnaissance about three miles in front. The country was quite open. There was a party of horse at some distance before us About 1 o'clock the advanced guard under General Craufurd consisting of the Light Battalion and four Companies of the Rifle Corps advanced. The order of march was four Companies in front, two about two hundred yards in front of either flank with skirmishers in front, then two pieces of artillery (3-pounders). Then followed the Light Battalion with a small rear guard and a few flankers.

" On arriving near the height on which I mentioned our having seen some horsemen in the morning, the same party appeared near a village. When we were within about 500 yards of it they began firing on us but they did not hit anyone; the two advanced Companies of the Rifle Corps attacked the village in double-quick time on which the Spaniards got on their horses and went off full gallop. . . .

" 1 July. Near Reduction we saw a few of the enemy and General Craufurd with only the Skirmishers of the Rifle Corps advanced upon it in the most spirited manner.

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"2 July. Forded the river Chuelo at Paso Chico. The men immediately dashed through the water which came about to their hips. Great was our joy at having gained this important pass; every individual was animated, the men cheered and could hardly be restrained from boisterous expressions of delight. . . ."

When Whitelocke reached Reduction on the evening of 1 July, with his starving and exhausted troops, he learnt that between that town and the Point of Quilmés where his vessels lay, there were two miles of deep morass. At first he was for halting the men and resting on the 2nd whilst he got supplies from the fleet and made a reconnaissance on the Chuelo and brought up his guns which were still far in rear. After much irresolution and counter-orders, at 2 a.m. on the morning of 2 July Gower was ordered to pass the Chuelo and march to Buenos Ayres to occupy a position in its northern suburbs on the river bank above the town and open communication with the fleet.

Gower proceeded on this as on the preceding days with his Brigades some four to five miles apart. Craufurd with the Light Brigade, as we have seen, crossed the Chuelo river at Paso Chico, Lumley's Brigade with men utterly exhausted and straggling arrived there at 3 p.m., just after Craufurd had passed it. Seeing some of the enemy about to take up a position on some heights opposite the ford, Craufurd asked Gower's leave to forestall them and having obtained it and gained the heights unopposed, he decided to push on straight to the town. Now it was that Craufurd showed that temper for which he was afterwards notorious. Twice

See Map V.,
p. 116.

did Gower send him orders to halt. Craufurd merely replied that he considered it very desirable to proceed and proceeded until he gained the Corral or slaughter-yard, a large open space. Gower overtook him here. The Light Brigade were halted and resting, waiting for some guns to come up, when they were suddenly opened on with grape and round-shot from three sides of the yard. Craufurd instantly ordered an attack. The Riflemen and Light Infantry Companies rushed forward in crescent form with a cheer, straight for the guns. The Spaniards

left their guns and fled as did their infantry, hotly pursued by the Light Brigade through the suburbs. Gower sent peremptory orders for Craufurd to return to the Corral, which he did swearing that he would have captured the town right away had he been permitted to do so !

The Spaniards had been completely surprised. They had posted 9,000 men and over 50 guns to guard the bridge over the Chuelo, near Reduction, 3,000 to guard another ford, unknown to the British and a third force to guard the Paso Chico itself. It was the second of these columns which had during its retirement encountered Craufurd at the Corral and been routed. Meanwhile Lumley's Brigade, which should have supported Craufurd's, owing to the exhausted condition of the men had entirely lost touch. By good luck it came across his Brigade at the Corral and bivouacked there. Whitelocke with the main body halted and bivouacked near the Paso Chico.

Before daybreak on the 3rd Whitelocke advanced but he did not complete the passage of the Chuelo until near 1 o'clock and it was not till near 3 that his whole force (save Mahon's detachment at Reduction) was reunited on the south side of the city. Meanwhile Gower had summoned the Spanish Commander, General Liniers, to surrender Buenos Ayres, and had received a defiant reply. Our outposts had been skirmishing all day and Whitelocke decided to put his men under shelter, for the rain was torrential ; and the exhausted troops received some food collected in the suburbs.

Buenos Ayres at this time consisted of a number of perfectly straight streets about 130 yards apart crossing one another at right angles and dividing the whole town into rectangular blocks. Its frontage along the river was about two miles and it ran back about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. On the north side was an open space where was the Bull-Ring or Plaza de Toros. In the centre of the river front was the Fort or Citadel and close to it the Cathedral, the Church of San Francisco and Convent of San Domingo. At the south end was the Residencia. The Corral and

"White's House," where Headquarters were, lay just $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles west of the Fort. Between the Plaza de Toros and the Fort two Churches, Santa Catalina and La Merced gave points or objective. The town was of most solid construction with flat-roofed houses surrounded by parapets, every one capable of being turned into a small fort.

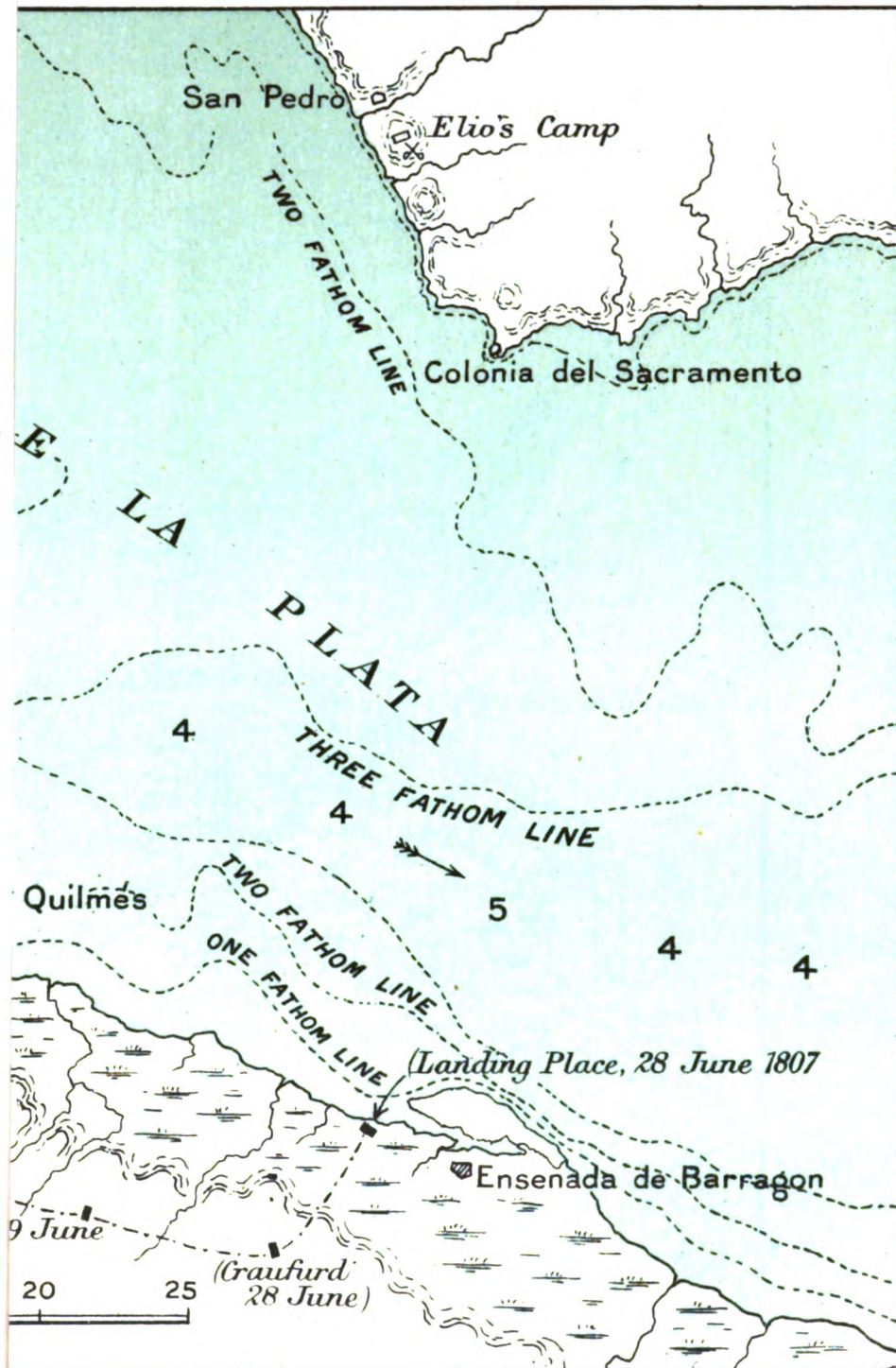
Whitelocke's original plan was to attack the town from the north side with his left resting on the river, land his heavy guns and with the aid of his shallow-draught gunboats bombard the town until it surrendered. This plan was amended at Leveson-Gower's suggestion. The final orders were to attack the town from the west with thirteen columns moving along different streets. The left of this line of columns was to seize the Plaza de Toros and the remainder were to push right through the town and seize and occupy houses along the foreshore. The plan was simple enough, although eminently venturesome and ignored the capabilities of Spaniards for street-fighting. The first difficulties arose from the general inaccuracy of the Spanish map of the place and this was the cause of the miscarriage of several of the orders. A second and more serious misunderstanding arose through the confusing orders issued by Whitelocke which led to Craufurd's Staff officer omitting a paragraph of crucial importance on the very reasonable ground that it was absolutely unintelligible. This paragraph enjoined on the columns forming the left wing of the attack *not* to incline to their *right*, and to those forming the right wing of the attack *not* to incline to their *left*.¹ As Fortescue points out, owing to the omission of a semi-colon, it was mere gibberish.

¹ The order ran as follows: "Each officer commanding a division of the left wing, which is from the 88th to the 87th inclusively, to take care that he does not incline to his right of the right wing, that is Light Brigade and 45th to the left."

It *should* have run thus: "of the left wing, . . . to take care that he does not incline to his right; [each officer commanding a division] of the right wing, that is Light Brigade and 45th [to take care that he does not incline] to his left."

Captain Lewis Butler (late 60th Rifles) discovered the omission of this paragraph.—*U.S. Mag.*, Aug. 1905.

MAP IV.



BUENOS AYRES EXPEDITION, 1807.

Route of The Light Brigade under Brig. Genl. R. Craufurd

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General Liniers meanwhile made vigorous preparations to meet the impending attack. Guns were posted to sweep the streets along which the British might advance, others were placed to bring a flank fire, trenches were cut, the houses were barricaded and provided with missiles of every sort to throw down on the attackers. The defenders consisted of 9,000 soldiers of varying quality and some 6,000 irregulars. Five thousand of the best marksmen were posted in the houses, supplied with ammunition and provisions. Two thousand occupied the Bull-Ring and the remainder were placed in and about the fort and at other defensible points.

Early on 5 July before dawn the attacking columns were in position. Deducting the detachment at Reduction, 1,100 men held in reserve, the wounded during the last two days' skirmishing and the stragglers who had fallen out on the march, the total strength of the attackers was under 5,000 all ranks. At 6.30 a.m. a cannon-shot gave the signal for the simultaneous advance of all the columns.

Although we are concerned only with the attack of Craufurd's Brigade, in order to render the story of the fight intelligible, it is necessary briefly to outline the fate of the other columns.

On the extreme left the five columns under Auchmuty after advancing along streets swept by grape-shot stormed the Plaza de Toros and made good their footing on the river front, capturing a thousand prisoners and 32 guns. This was only done at the cost of over 700 casualties.

Two streets south of Auchmuty, Lumley advanced and his two left columns of attack, the 36th Regiment, after fighting their way up to the river bank came under the fire of 7 guns from the Citadel and had to seek for cover in the houses, powerless to do more. His two right columns (the 88th Regt.) advancing under heavy artillery and musketry fire and a storm of missiles, hand-grenades, bricks, &c., from the housetops, captured a sandbag breastwork and gained the river bank only to find

themselves trapped and enfiladed by the guns from the fort. Forcing their way into the nearest houses, they made a desperate defence, but they were commanded from every side. There was no prospect of any help and after enduring heavy losses for several hours, first one and then the other wing surrendered, and were marched into the fort. It was now about 11.15 a.m. Lumley's left columns were now subjected to a furious attack and withdrew north and joined Auchmuty about 3 p.m.

In the centre, where Whitelocke had taken up his position, the horseless Carabineers and 9th Light Dragoons with 2 guns had been ordered to move down the two streets which ran towards the Fort and to make a false attack.

On the extreme right of the attack, the 45th, under Lieutenant-Colonel Guard, moving in two columns, pushed along the southern streets and in accordance with verbal orders not prescribed in the plan of attack, occupied the Residencia on the river bank south of the town with trifling loss.

We now come to the Right Centre attack under Craufurd, in which the fortunes of the Rifle Regiment were involved. Of the stirring events of this attack I am fortunate enough to be able to give the original report¹ written by Craufurd himself on 9 July, only four days after the desperate undertaking.

“BUENOS AYRES,

“9 July 1807.

“SIR,—In obedience to your orders, to report to you the proceedings of the Light Brigade in the attack upon this town I have the honour to acquaint you that before the approach of day it was formed in two columns upon the roads allotted to it in the General disposition. The

¹ The accuracy of this report is borne out in every detail by the evidence on Whitelocke's Court Martial and other published statements of the occurrences described.

heads of the columns close behind the centries (*sic*) and our advanced piquets ; from which situation we moved forward to the attack at the appointed signal.

“The left division of the Brigade consisting of 5 Companies of Light Infantry and 4 Companies of the 95th with 1 3-pounder, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Pack of the 71st, proceeded through the town without material opposition till they came within four squares of the river, when Colonel Pack with the three front companies of his column turned to the left down one of the streets leading to the market-place and ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Cadogan with the rear of his column to turn at the same time into a parallel street and advance in the same direction. This movement immediately brought both Lieutenant-Colonel Pack's and Lieutenant-Colonel Cadogan's divisions close to the enemy's powerful defences. Lieutenant-Colonel Cadogan got nearly as far as the west side of the Jesuits' College but after sustaining a very great loss of men from the enemy who lined the houses on each side of the street, he was obliged to fall back leaving a gun at which all the men and horses were killed or disabled. He then attempted to get possession of a strong building but having no(t) sufficient implements for forcing its entrance he was obliged to throw himself into a house commanded on all sides and in every respect untenable. Lieutenant-Colonel Pack with the other three companies having advanced nearly to the east side of the Jesuits' College under a most destructive fire by which he himself was wounded and having persevered with the greatest intrepidity until he found it utterly impossible to penetrate, he fell back with the intention of proceeding to the building called the Residencia on the south skirts of the town. Just at this moment he was met by the right column of the brigade consisting of 4 companies of Light Infantry, 4 companies of the Rifle Corps and 1 3-pounder with which (in conformity with the General disposition) I had advanced quite through that part of the town and down to the water side where I also turned to my left towards the fort, the North East Bastion¹ of which was then in view at the distance of about 400 yards. The spot where I met Lieutenant-Colonel Pack was very near the Convent of St. Domingo which is three squares from the fort and market-place. After learning from him what had passed with his division we agreed that the best thing for us to do

¹ Should be “south-east.”

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was to take possession for the present of the Convent of St. Domingo and afterwards if possible to attack the Franciscan Church which was between us and the Market-place.

“The 45th Regiment which had advanced on my right, but which was not under my orders, had in the meantime taken possession of the Residencia without any opposition, that building being so far from the centre of the town that the streets and houses in its neighbourhood were not occupied.

“Lieutenant-Colonel Guard having left the Battalion Companies of the Regiment in that post under the command of Major Nicolls had come down with the Grenadier Company towards the centre of the town and joined me near the Convent. It was now about 8 o'clock and in these circumstances we remained for a considerable time in the Convent in perfect ignorance and without the possibility of obtaining information of what was passing in other quarters. Had I been aware of the general state of affairs, I should probably have thought it right to retreat to the Residencia in which at that time I should have met with no opposition. But without the certainty of the necessity of doing so, I did not think myself justified in abandoning the post which we had gained so near to the enemy's principal defences and which in the event of a renewal of the attack would have been essentially conducive to our ultimate success. From the top of the Convent we saw the English colours flying on the heights of the Plaza de Toros ; but the post being quite out of the Town, to the Eastward (northward) could not have any influence on our situation.

“The firing had now ceased on all sides (or at least we heard none) except around the Convent of St. Domingo, upon which from the moment we got possession of it at 8 in the morning the enemy had kept up an incessant attack. I have since learnt that Lieutenant-Colonel Cadogan of the Light Brigade and Major Travers of the 95th Regiment after a most gallant defence of the wretched post into which they had been obliged to throw themselves and in which a great many men and officers were lost had been forced to surrender about ten o'clock, that the centre of the army had found it impossible to penetrate and that the 88th Regiment forming the Right of the Left wing of the army, after approaching as near to the North side of the Market-place as my Brigade had done to the South side of it, had also been under the necessity of

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surrendering a little before Lieutenant-Colonel Cadogan's division had done so.

“Between eleven and twelve o'clock, a Spanish officer with a flag of truce came to the Convent sent by General Liniers to inform me that all our attacks had failed, that the 88th regiment and many others were prisoners and to summon me to surrender to which I gave the most perempory (*sic*) refusal.

“It was now however perfectly evident that we were the only troops remaining within the town and that being so close to the centre of it we were completely surrounded by the great body of the enemy's forces disengaged by the cessation of fire in all other quarters.

“All the houses close to the gates of the Convent being occupied by the enemy they pressed forward in the street to take our remaining 3-pounder which was on the outside (of the gate commanded with great intrepidity by Captain Nicholls of the Royal Artillery) when they were most gallantly charged by Lieutenant-Colonel Guard with the Grenadiers of the 45th and a part of the Light Infantry under Major Trotter. The latter was killed, Captain Payne of the 45th Grenadiers shot through the breast, and the greater part of his Company killed or wounded in an instant but the gun was saved.

“Nothing now remained possible but to confine ourselves to the defence of the Convent and this defence consisted chiefly in the fire of the Riflemen from the top which was extremely well managed by Major McLeod, but after some time the quantity of round-shot, grape and musketry to which they were exposed was so great as to force them to quit the only situations from whence our fire could prevent the further approach of the enemy's cannon towards that side of it which was nearer to the market and the whole of which front consisted only of wooden gates. After maintaining the post till four o'clock I was of opinion that a retreat, surrounded as we were in every direction by six or seven thousand men with many guns occupying all the houses and streets in the vicinity of the Convent, was utterly impracticable and that the enemy had it perfectly in his power to annihilate the detachment if we continued there till the night set in. In this situation, it being evident that the sacrifice of the troops remaining with me could be of no use to the Army, after consulting Lieutenant-Colonels Pack and Guard and Major McLeod, I felt it my duty to communicate with the enemy

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by holding out a flag of truce and finding no other terms could be obtained, I surrendered the remnant Brigade as prisoners of war.

“It is impossible for any officers or men to behave with more zeal than the whole of those of the Right Brigade have done since I had the honour to command them.

“ R. CRAUFURD.”

In the preceding account it will be seen that Craufurd was at the time he wrote ignorant of the fact that Guard had been verbally instructed by Whitelocke to hold the Residencia and also that owing to the omission of the paragraph in the orders, he and Pack and Guard had alike disobeyed the order prohibiting them to incline to their *left* after entering the city. Meanwhile Whitelocke had been waiting for reports but none came in. At nine o'clock he ordered the 9th Light Dragoons to advance towards the Great Square but they were met with a heavy fire and after severe losses had to fall back. One of his Aides-de-Camp now reported that he had seen the British colours flying on the left (Plaza de Toros) and right centre (Craufurd's post). But it was not till half-past four that he heard from Auchmuty of his own success and of the surrender of the 88th. Of Craufurd he knew absolutely nothing, nor did he hear anything of him all night. At 6.30 a.m. on 6 July he sent a party to bring up Mahon, who it was found had advanced from Reduction across the Chuelo on the previous day and encamped within two miles of the Residencia, which building was still held by the 45th. Still there was no news of Craufurd. The Spaniards now brought up two howitzers to batter the Residencia but the 45th made a vigorous sally, drove off the enemy and captured both guns. Meanwhile, soon after daylight Liniers wrote to Whitelocke saying he had captured Craufurd and over a thousand prisoners and offering to restore them as well as all those taken with Beresford, in the previous year, if Whitelocke would withdraw from La Plata. Whitelocke rejected the proposal, but suggested a truce for 24 hours to collect the wounded. His killed

numbered 401 of all ranks, and wounded 649, and no less than 1,924 (including 250 more wounded) were prisoners, a total of close upon 3,000 casualties or considerably more than half the force engaged. On the other hand the British had captured more than 1,000 prisoners and 30 guns, they held strong posts on either flank of the city and there were 6,000 troops ready for further operations. But the troops had lost all confidence in their leader, a significant and a most serious fact. Whitelocke justly realized that the subjugation of the Province was impossible and that to retain Buenos Ayres would require a big force from England and after agreeing to an armistice, on the following day signed an agreement. In this a mutual exchange of prisoners was arranged and Buenos Ayres was to be evacuated in ten days and Monte Video in two months. Fortescue says most truly that this decision of Whitelocke's was the one act of wisdom in the campaign and few will dispute it. But our gallant soldiers, bitter at the treatment they had received from an enemy they justly despised in the field, were furious, and showed their resentment in many ways. "General Whitelocke is a coward or traitor or both," was what they wrote on the walls of Buenos Ayres. With an army possessed of such a temper it would have been dangerous to trifle or to take any serious risks. Whitelocke was sent home, tried by court-martial and cashiered. It has been the fashion to lay the entire blame upon the unfortunate Whitelocke for this terrible reverse to our arms. Further, irresponsible writers of our military history have called it "a most melancholy and disgraceful event" and "the greatest military disgrace and ignominy." I am not concerned here with the defence of Whitelocke but many who have studied the evidence given on his trial are not at all satisfied that he was so entirely to blame as was popularly believed at the time.

Fortescue gives an excellent and impartial summary of the whole case and rightly condemns the ignorance and misconceptions of our Ministers and the absurdity of their orders first to Craufurd and then to Whitelocke.

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The original culprit who brought this avalanche of troubles upon us was Sir Home Popham who although tried by court martial was merely reprimanded and almost immediately employed again upon a very important service. The precise numbers of our killed and wounded are difficult to determine and probably never will be exactly known for, sad to relate, very many of the wounded died from slight wounds, particularly in the legs owing to tetanus supervening. The same thing was remarked after the storming of Monte Video.

The losses in the 95th Rifle Regiment were : 1st Battalion : Capt. Jenkinson, 2 Sergeants, 2 Buglers and 36 Riflemen killed ; Lieutenant Turner (died of wounds) ; Captain O'Hare, Lieutenants Cadoux and Macleod, wounded severely ; Majors Macleod and Travers and Lieutenant McCulloch wounded slightly. 8 Sergeants, 2 Buglers and 73 Riflemen were wounded and 2 Sergeants 2 Buglers and 39 rank and file were missing. Of the three Companies of the 2nd Battalion the loss was 3 Sergeants, 1 Bugler and 46 Riflemen killed and Lieutenants Mill and Scott, 6 Sergeants and 40 Riflemen wounded. The total losses in killed and wounded on this day in the Rifle Regiment alone, were 10 Officers and 219 other ranks. This out of an effective strength of 24 Officers and 580 other ranks.

In accordance with the agreement, the British prisoners were released on the morning of 8 July. The Force was embarked on the 12th, sailed the next day and arrived off Monte Video on the 15th. The three Companies of the 2nd Battalion under Major Gardner embarked at Monte Video on 12 July and landed at Portsmouth on 2 December whence they marched to Hythe and rejoined the 2nd Battalion there on 18 December. On 8 August the 5 Companies of the 1st Battalion sailed for England and arrived at Falmouth on 9 November. Thence they proceeded by sea to Dover about the end of January 1808, and marched to Shorncliffe and Hythe, where they joined the 5 Companies which had been employed under Beckwith in Denmark during their absence in South America.

It has been said by those who knew Robert Craufurd that the disastrous Buenos Ayres expedition embittered him throughout his after life. That he was profoundly incensed against his Chief, General Whitelocke, and that he did not conceal his views on the subject is tolerably plain; also that feeling ran very high among our Riflemen is undeniable, and there was a rumour that Craufurd had given orders to shoot the General! Rifleman Harris repeats this fable in his "Recollections,"¹ as well as the equally absurd tale, also current among our men, that General Whitelocke's sword was broken over his head after he had been tried by Court Martial. All the same, such stories testify to the exasperated feelings of the men in the ranks who could not understand why they were subjected to a humiliating surrender to a foe they despised. It can easily be imagined that Craufurd, a hot-tempered, hasty, and violent man, when he became aware of the hopelessness of his position in the San Domingo Convent and realized that he had been left to his fate, may have said things in his wrath which were heard by the soldiers around him. Indeed the whole course of events, since his first appointment to the expedition were enough to irritate a much less headstrong man. Having been given supreme command at the outset of the "Overseas" adventure, he had been compelled to endure supersession by chiefs in whom he had no confidence and had been a helpless spectator of the badly-arranged landing and worse-planned advance on Buenos Ayres. Whenever he had found an opportunity to act independently he had greatly distinguished himself, and the fact that he was forced to surrender to a foe within three days of his brilliant stroke at the Corral on 2 July, must have added to his wrath. It is certain that General Leveson-Gower forgave the wilfulness of his somewhat intractable subordinate on that day, for he gave generous testimony to the value of his energy and determination.

¹ "Recollections of Rifleman Harris," 8.

History of the Rifle Brigade

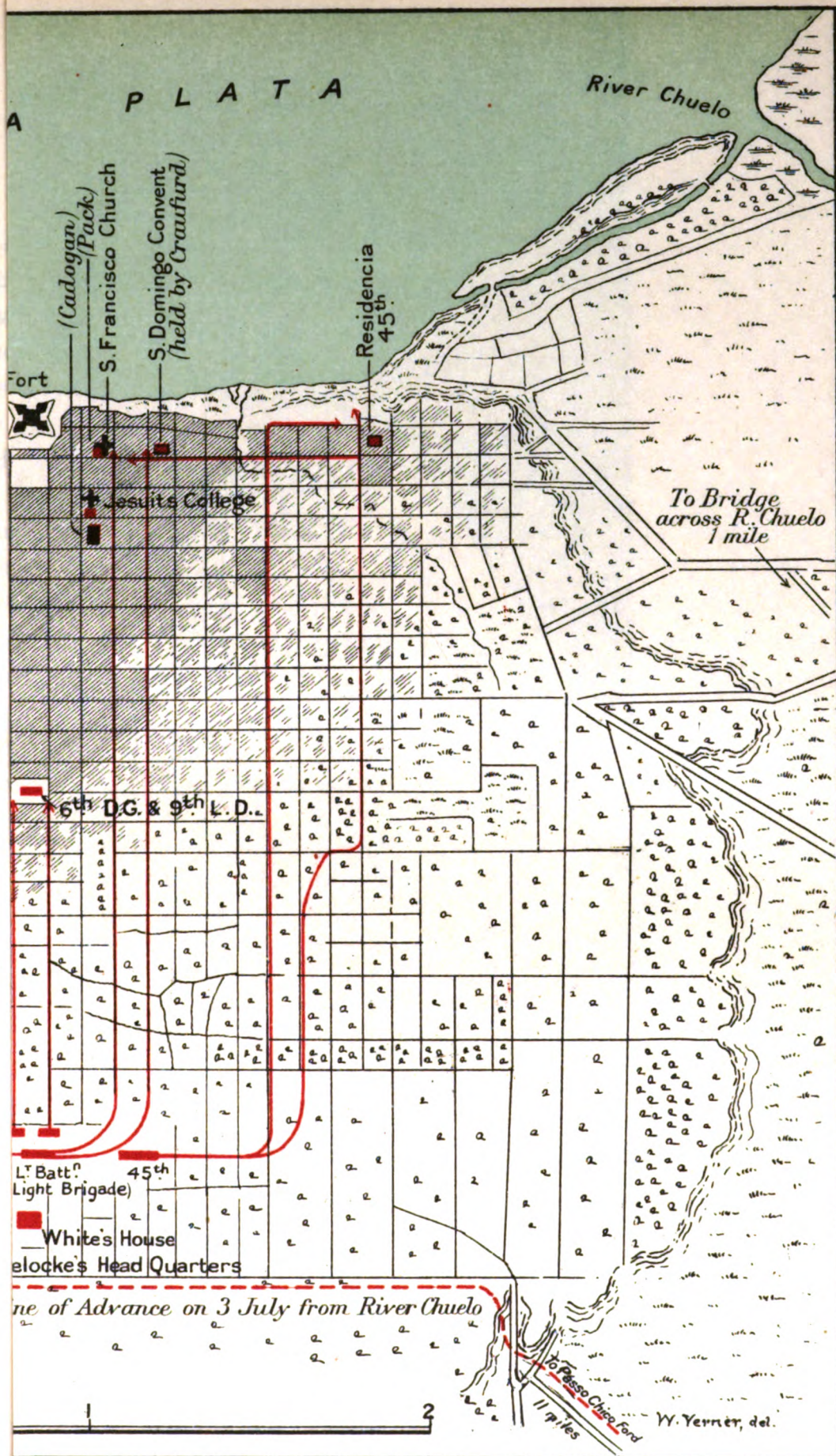
In a despatch written by him on the night of the 3rd, from the "Corral de Misserala" (Passo Chico), to General Whitelocke, reporting the results of the previous day's operations, he says —

"I directed an immediate advance to be made upon their left flank with the bayonet, which was executed by Brigadier-General Crauford (*sic*) in the most perfect manner with his Brigade, and he was so well seconded by the gallantry of Lieut.-Colonel Pack and Major Travers, the officers and men of the 95th and Light Battalion, that in five minutes the enemy's force, through strongly posted behind hedges and embankments, gave way, leaving about 60 killed and 70 prisoners, with all their artillery, consisting of 9 guns, 1 howitzer, 3 tumbrils, with limbers complete. I beg to state that the conduct of every officer and soldier engaged has been admirable. I am happy to say that our loss has been but trifling, not exceeding 14 R. and F. killed, 5 Officers and 25 R. and F. wounded. The exact return I have not been able to obtain. I have, &c.

" (Signed) J. LEVESON-GOWER,
" Major-General."

A somewhat tragic mistake occurred during the defence of the Convent. The Spaniards made repeated attempts to close in on the wooden gateways of the building in order to fire them or blow them in. Two noted good shots in the Rifle Corps, Riflemen Plunket and Fisher, were hoisted by their comrades on top of the roof of an out-house which commanded the approach on that side. Plunket's name was destined to appear again during the Peninsular War, as a daring soldier and deadly shot. It is on record that these two men literally shot down every Spaniard who ventured to show himself within range, and this although exposed for some hours to a very heavy fire. The enemy, however, knowing well the untenable and hopeless position of the force, sought to induce these desperate men

¹ This despatch was found by Sergt.-Major G. Townsend, late 2nd Battalion, in September, 1912, when searching some papers for me at the Public Record Office. (Reference Book No. 84. Buenos Ayres, 1807, W.O. 1, 162.)



ACK ON BUENOS AYRES, 5 JULY, 1807.

1814, and from a military sketch by Lieut.-Colonel L. Holland, D.Q.M.G. Robert Craufurd, dated July, 1807.

and outside of town are divided by prickly pear hedges and sometimes covered with peach orchards.

to surrender by showing a white flag at the corner where so many of their comrades had fallen. Sad to relate, Plunket, ignorant of "the customs of war in like cases," upon seeing a man waving the flag of truce, exclaimed, "I'll have a slap at the fellow with the white handkerchief," and promptly shot him, wounding him mortally, through both thighs. Shortly after this, the Spaniards pressed in on all sides and brought up guns, and the surrender took place.

It is recorded that many years afterwards one of our officers met Plunket in civil life and asked him how many Spaniards, who attempted to reach the gateway at Buenos Ayres, he had shot down. To this Plunket replied, "I think I killed about twenty, sir," adding "and I shot a gentleman with a flag of truce, sir." During the Peninsular War Plunket no doubt learnt to know better, but the tale is given to show how easy it is for a gallant soldier to commit thus, through ignorance, a serious crime against the rules of civilized warfare.¹

¹ *The United Service Magazine*, 1842, Part III., 68.

CHAPTER X.

SIEGE OF COPENHAGEN AND SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY, 1807.

The Rosetta Expedition—Lord Cathcart's Expedition to Stralsund—Treaty of Tilsit—Napoleon's Plans to crush Great Britain—England's demand for temporary surrender of Danish Fleet—Combined British Naval and Military attack on Copenhagen decided upon—Admiral Gambier sails for the Sound—Cathcart is withdrawn from Stralsund—British Force arrives off Vedbaek—Sir Arthur Wellesley's Brigade lands and covers the disembarkation—Strength and composition of the 1st and 2nd Battalions—95th Rifle Regiment forms part of Wellesley's Brigade—The defences of Copenhagen—The British force commences the Siege—The Danes attempt a diversion from the west—Wellesley is detached with a mixed Brigade to repel them—Action of Kjøge—The Danes scattered—Bombardment of Copenhagen—Surrender of the fortress and Fleet—The Rifles on outpost duty guarding the south and west shores of Zealand—Tribute to the generous conduct of the Danes—The Expedition returns to England—The Rifles once again quartered at Hythe.

See Map VI.
p. 128.

WHILST the abortive Expedition to La Plata was in full swing, the British Cabinet apparently in the exuberance of the unquestioned sea-power now wielded by Great Britain had been occupied with a series of others nearer home.

In February, 1807, General Fox, who was in Sicily, was sent to Alexandria with 6,000 troops, two-thirds of whom were British and one-third foreigners in our pay including the *Chasseurs Britanniques*. In an attempt to drive out the Turkish and Albanian troops from Rosetta he met with a disastrous defeat losing nearly 600 killed and wounded out of a force of about 1,600 engaged. This was on 31 March.

In June Lord Cathcart was despatched with 14,000 of the King's

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German Legion to Stralsund in Swedish Pomerania to assist King Gustavus.

Meanwhile on 14 June 1807 Napoleon had crushed the Russians at Friedland and in the Treaty of Tilsit which immediately followed he and the Emperor of Russia virtually agreed to divide Europe between them. By secret articles, which by some mysterious manner fortunately became known to our Government, Russia promised to close her ports against British commerce and to go to war with England should she not make peace with Napoleon. And now came the crux ; in the event of England refusing to make peace, Russia and France were to call upon Denmark, Sweden, and Portugal, the three remaining maritime nations possessed of any ports still open to her, to close them to England and further, to declare war upon her. The situation was most critical, and for once our Government rose to the emergency. Should Denmark close her ports ; to begin with, Lord Cathcart's force at Stralsund would be cut off. England had no ally save Sweden and Sweden was helpless and although, thanks to Lord Nelson and the Navy, France no longer had any ships of war of any account, with the combined fleets of Europe at her disposal she would strive to bring England to starvation or possibly defeat her at sea.

One point was clear, the Danish Fleet was powerful and in fine order and at all costs Napoleon must be prevented both from using it and the Danish ports as a base for an invasion of England. So it was a message was sent to Denmark that unless she suspended war preparations and gave England temporary possession of her fleet and principal dockyard and arsenal at Copenhagen, we would send a fleet and army to attack that city. Napoleon about the same time sent Denmark an ultimatum that she must choose between war with France and war with England and Bernadotte was named to invade her Continental territory.

It was cruel on the unfortunate Danes, but self-preservation being

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the first law, England was thus compelled for the second time in seven years to attack a nation with whom we had for generations lived in friendship. Few imagined that a high-spirited race such as the Danes would assent to our demands—nor did they. Our preparations were swift and secret. On 26 July Lord Gambier was despatched with a powerful fleet to the Baltic, and 19,000 troops were ordered to embark, Cathcart's force was withdrawn from Stralsund (which at once fell into the hands of the French), and joined the British Fleet in the Sound.

On 15 August the greater part of the Fleet anchored off Vedbaek, about 12 miles north of Copenhagen, and at 5 a.m. on the 16th the disembarkation commenced.

The first troops to land were an Infantry Brigade under Major-General Sir Arthur Wellesley. The Brigade consisted of the 1st Battalion 43rd Light Infantry, 2nd Battalion 52nd Light Infantry, 1st Battalion 92nd Regiment, 5 Companies of the 1st and 5 Companies of the 2nd Battalion 95th Rifle Regiment.

It will be recalled how when the 5 Companies of the 1st Battalion and 3 Companies of the 2nd Battalion were sent to La Plata, these battalions were quartered at Faversham. Upon the Danish expedition being decided upon, Headquarters and the remaining 5 Companies of the 1st Battalion under Sidney Beckwith and 5 out of the 7 remaining Companies of the 2nd Battalion under Hamlet Wade marched from Hythe to Deal and sailed thence on 29 July.

The 1st Battalion Companies were those of Stewart, Ross, Gordon, Grant and Cameron, and their total strength amounted to 2 Field Officers, 5 Captains, 8 Lieutenants, 5 2nd Lieutenants, Adjutant, 2 Surgeons and Paymaster, 29 Sergeants, 27 Corporals, 11 Buglers, and 488 Riflemen.

The 2nd Battalion Companies were those of Crampton, Pakenham, Balvaird, Leach and Glass, and their total strength amounted to 2 Field Officers, 5 Captains, 4 Lieutenants, 6 2nd Lieutenants, Adjutant,

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Quartermaster and Surgeon, 40 Sergeants, 39 Corporals, 13 Buglers, and 467 Riflemen.

The occasion of the landing in Zealand is memorable in the history of the Regiment in that it was the first time our Riflemen came under the eye of the Chief under whom it was to be their good fortune to fight without cessation every year onward until the crowning victory of Waterloo. It is further memorable, in that three of the four Battalions comprising his Brigade were later to win fame under his orders in the Peninsula.

Sir Arthur Wellesley's orders were to take up a position to cover the disembarkation of the main body. He had with him a Brigade of Light Artillery, in addition to the three Infantry Battalions and the Rifles. The Guards Brigade and the 1st Infantry Brigade followed constituting the 1st Division, also one Brigade of the 2nd Division, another Brigade of Light Artillery and a Squadron of German Dragoons.

The landing was effected without opposition ; the men were put into the ships' boats and rowed ashore in a flat calm and on gaining the shore Sir Arthur at once sent out the Companies of Riflemen to search some large woods in the vicinity and reconnoitre along the various roads and paths. The whole force thus landed made a short move southward towards Copenhagen the same evening, moving in three Columns, the Riflemen being employed to cover the front and left flank during the operation.

On the following day, Spencer's Brigade landed at Skovshoved, about half-way between Copenhagen and Vedbaek, and the army took up a general line from the sea south of Frederickborg to Tuborg on the shore of the Sound about two miles from the defences of Copenhagen and invested the town, Wellesley's Brigade occupying the centre portion of the line of investment from Gladsaxe to Emdrup.

The rear of every British Division had to be protected by piquets

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as well as the front since there was every likelihood that the Danes might assemble in Zealand and obtain reinforcements from the mainland.

On the 18th the British Cavalry landed, consisting of the three regiments of the King's German Legion and these, with an Infantry Battalion, made the rear secure. Hardly had the investment been completed when the Danish Garrison made a sortie upon the posts of the British left from their most northern defences on the shore of the Sound, supported by a number of shallow-draught gunboats. The British ships of light draught opened fire on them from a distance with little effect and eventually the Danes were driven back by the fire of our field guns. During this affair, the Danish Light troops opposite our centre made a diversion and kept our Riflemen busy.

Before giving the subsequent events of the attack, I will describe briefly the fortifications of Copenhagen. The City lies at the south-east angle of the Island of Zealand and the end of the adjacent island of Amager, the channel between the two portions forming the dockyard and arsenal. Around the whole ran the permanent defences. These were of the most approved type consisting on the Zealand side of a series of bastion-traced fronts well provided with frontal and flanking fire, with ravelins, counter-guards and other out-works, protected by a double wet ditch of great depth. Outside of this was an extensive inundation. On the side facing the island of Amager the defences were equally strong, the ditches being of great width. On the north was the citadel with low batteries to sweep the entrance to the dockyard and harbour, and a mile outside on the end of a spit lay the formidable Tre-Kroner, the "Three Crown" Battery which had proved so costly to Nelson in his attack on the Danish Fleet in 1801. The whole of the ramparts were armed with heavy guns so disposed as to bring an effective frontal, flanking and cross fire on every line of approach. In addition, batteries formed of sunken blockships enfiladed the line of

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the channel by which Nelson had advanced. The Garrison consisted of 5,000 troops and as many more enrolled burghers and the whole population were liable to Militia service. It will thus be seen that Copenhagen presented a most formidable obstacle for attack. The weak spot was on the land side where extensive suburbs had arisen along the roads which entered the fortress.

On the 21st another British Brigade landed at Skovshoved and next day the King's Germans from Stralsund landed at Kjøge 21 miles south-west of Copenhagen. On the 23rd the Danish gunboats made an attack and were beaten off by our ships. At last, on the 24th the British advanced and closed in on the suburbs, each Division clearing its own immediate front and forcing the Danish piquets to take shelter under the guns of the town. The British now occupied the suburbs and being completely screened from both view and fire, were able to advance their batteries from the first position to points within, at some places, 400 yards from the town. This failure of the Danes to clear the suburbs made the capture of Copenhagen inevitable. On this day the Riflemen had some skirmishing among the gardens and suburbs and had a few casualties.

The Danes now attempted to attack the British lines from the west, and information of their assembling south of Roskilde having been received, Sir Arthur Wellesley was ordered on 26 August to seek out this force and disperse it. He was given in addition to his Infantry Brigade two light brigades of Artillery (8 guns) and 8 squadrons, 1 Horse Battery and 1 Battalion of the King's German Legion. Wellesley divided his force into two detachments, one under General von Linsingen¹ with whom he sent the 2nd Battalion 95th, with the

¹ Linsingen's Detachment: 3 squadrons Cavalry, $\frac{1}{2}$ Battery H.A., K.G.L. Det. of 43rd, 5 Cos. 2/95th, 6th Batt. K.G.L. Wellesley's Detachment: 5 squadrons K.G.L., 1 Battery R.H.A., $\frac{1}{2}$ Battery H.A., K.G.L. Det. of 43rd, 2/52nd, 1/92nd, 5 Cos., 1/95th.

object of working south and cutting off the retreat of the Danes, whilst he attacked them in front with the other. The combination however failed, the Danes falling back southward on Kjöge. Wellesley thereupon ordered Linsingen to halt whilst he fell back to Roskilde so as to cover the rear of the British right. A day later he again advanced and ordered Linsingen to turn the left of the Danes' position along the Kjöge rivulet at Lellinge whilst he made a front attack.

ACTION OF KJÖGE.

On the 29th the German Hussars got in touch with the enemy who seemed to be in some force with infantry in the centre, cavalry on both flanks and a considerable reserve. Wellesley, after halting and waiting some time for Linsingen's appearance, decided to attack. He commenced the action by an artillery fire and threw forward the five companies of the 1st Battalion of the Rifles in skirmishing order to cover the front; the infantry then advanced in single echelon of battalions from the left. The 92nd, who moved next to the sea, in consequence led the echelon. The Danes after a slight resistance retreated to some entrenchments north of the town and took up a position facing east with their cavalry massed on their right ready to charge the Highlanders as soon as they should wheel forward to renew the attack. Wellesley at once moved his Cavalry to the threatened flank and ordered the 43rd to fall back and form a second line. The Highlanders soon carried the trenches and the Danes retreated into the town closely followed by the 1st Battalion of the 95th. The whole of Wellesley's force now advanced and Linsingen's troops coming up joined in the pursuit. General Oxholm, the second-in-command of the Danish army, made a stand in the village of Herfolge. Here he occupied the churchyard which was considerably higher than the rest of the village, but he was compelled after a short resistance to surrender with about 400 men. The German Hussars made a vigorous pursuit

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and many Danes were killed and wounded and over fifteen hundred prisoners as well as all their artillery were taken.

The German and British losses were extremely small, owing no doubt to the fact that the Danish troops were mostly undisciplined and unfit to oppose regular troops. The losses of the 95th were but small. The Return of Casualties shows 5 men of the 1st Battalion wounded on the 29th, and 2 men of the 2nd Battalion "missing." Sir Arthur in his despatch merely says "We have lost but a few men of the 92nd and 95th,"¹ and names no other casualties in his force. But it is gratifying to record that in the same despatch he mentions how, when the enemy gave way to the attack of the 92nd, they were "followed in the most gallant style by the 1st Battalion of the 95th."²

The "conduct and steadiness" of the Rifles are also recorded and he adds that they had "particular opportunities for distinguishing themselves." This combat at Kjöge has never attracted much attention, first because it was only a small affair and secondly because it was merely a side-show of the main business in hand, namely, the capture of the Danish Fleet. But its strategical results were of very great importance for it put a stop once and for all to any attempts to relieve the beleaguered city. Also it showed the Danes the impossibility with their half-trained Militia of opposing regular troops of the type Wellesley commanded.

Kjöge was the first independent action fought by Wellesley in Europe. He had seen service in the campaigns of the Duke of York in Flanders in 1794-99, but only as a regimental officer, and since then, 1800-03, he had exercised independent command in several Indian campaigns. Henceforward he was destined to be employed in the field in Europe almost continuously up to the crowning victory of Waterloo.

¹ Supplementary Despatches, vi., 10.

² Wellington's Despatches, iv., 4.

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On 31 August all the British batteries were completed and ready to open fire and Lord Cathcart, a very humane man, who it is well known detested the duty confided to him, sent a summons to the Commandant strongly urging him to spare the city and inhabitants the horror of a bombardment and renewing the offer he had made when he first arrived in the Sound, namely, that upon the delivery of the Danish Fleet the British force would restore all captured property and would at once leave Denmark. Further he gave a solemn pledge to return the Danes their ships upon the conclusion of a general peace. To this urgent appeal, the Danes sent an indignant refusal.

Cathcart hoping to save the inhabitants the misery of a bombardment still hesitated to give the order for the attack to commence. Finally at half past seven on the evening of 2 September the British Batteries opened fire. In less than five minutes the town was set on fire and after a few hours it was burning fiercely in many places. After twelve hours bombardment the British Batteries ceased fire, but on the evening of the 3rd they opened again but with less energy owing to insufficient ammunition. On the 4th they continued the bombardment with vigour. On the 5th the Danish General asked for an armistice of 24 hours so as to arrange a capitulation and on the 7th the terms of this were agreed to.

The Danish fleet and all naval stores were handed over to Great Britain, all other property was restored on both sides and the British promised to evacuate Zealand within six weeks. This extremely unpleasant yet painfully necessary operation was thus brought to a successful issue. The whole British loss was trifling, only 10 officers and less than 200 men being killed or wounded.

During the progress of these events at Copenhagen Wellesley's command was employed in military occupation of various towns and villages in the interior of the island of Zealand. Both Battalions of the Rifles were for two days following on the fight at Kjøge employed

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in scouring the woods around Herfolge and were subsequently cantoned near Ringsted. It is on record that Wellesley enforced the strictest discipline throughout his command and that in consequence the inhabitants, despite their natural resentment at our presence, were on good terms with the invaders.

As the armistice of 7 September following on the surrender of Copenhagen only applied to the Island of Zealand and not to the Danish Mainland or other Islands it was considered advisable to station strong posts along the Western and Southern sides of the island. The first Battalion was thereupon moved to Slagelse with outposts at Kallundborg, Korsör and Skjelskör on the shores of the Great Belt and the 2nd Battalion to Naestved with outposts at Lundbye, Vordingborg and Praestö watching the southern end. Here they remained until the middle of October. During this month working parties from both the Navy and Army were employed in clearing the Dockyard of stores and removing the Danish ships. Eighteen ships of the line, sixteen frigates, 9 gun-brigs and 25 gunboats, being the whole of their Naval force, were carried off. A few that were not seaworthy or were in too unfinished a state for the voyage were destroyed.

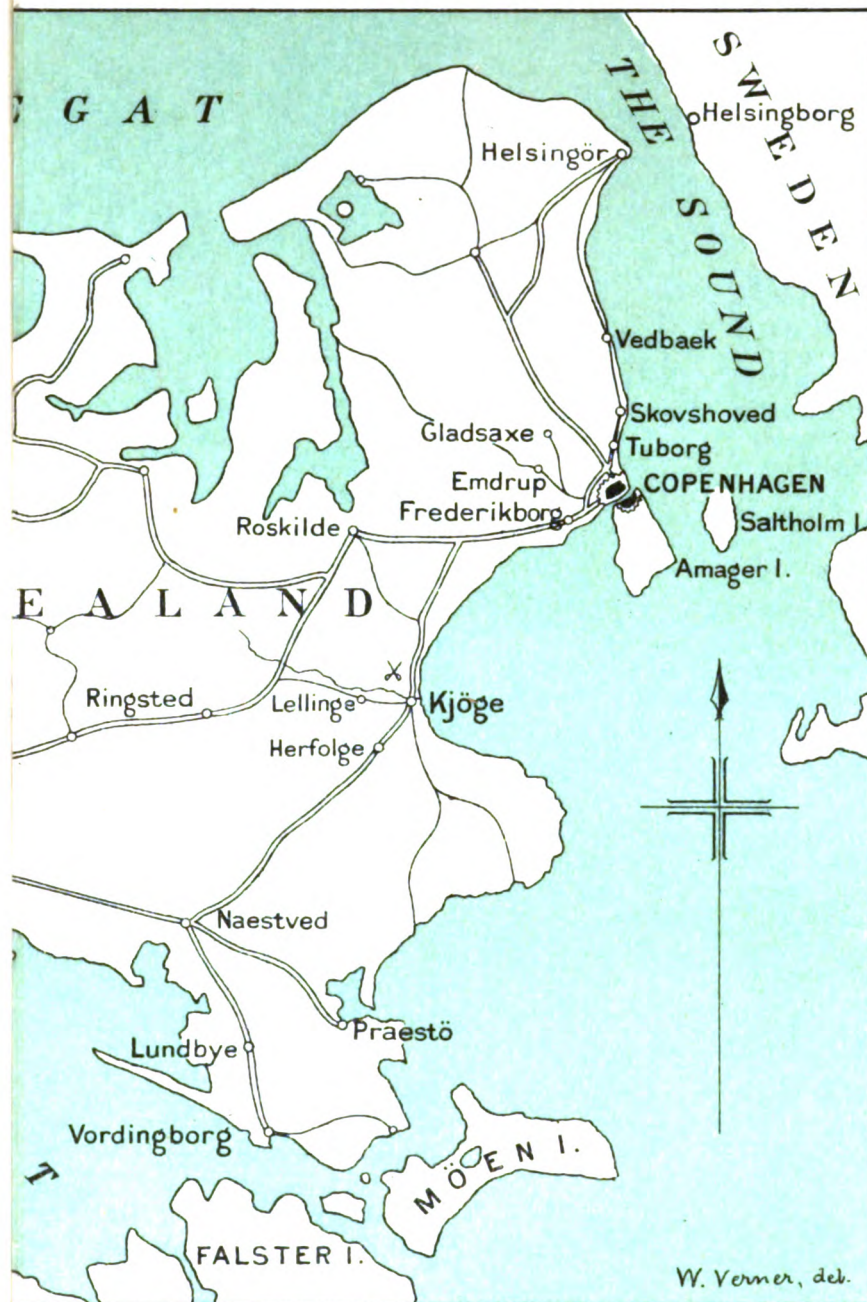
The Battalions embarked at Copenhagen, the 2nd Battalion on board the *Princess Caroline*, a Danish Prize of 74 guns and the 1st Battalion on the *Agamemnon* (64) and sailed on 21 October. They had a stormy passage lasting over three weeks and arrived on 15 November in the Downs. Here they disembarked on the following day in large pilot boats. There was a heavy sea running and it is not surprising to learn that as the boats touched the beach at Deal, there were a good many wet green jackets. Thus, so far as our Riflemen were concerned, ended the second expedition to Copenhagen. The one pleasant reminiscence of it is the high opinion formed by all ranks, officers and men, of the gallant Danes. "They are a brave, honourable and manly people" writes Leach. Whilst Surtees describes them

as "kind-hearted, hospitable and inoffensive in the highest degree." It was the cruel fortune of war that compelled us to treat them so drastically.

Lieut. Cox thus summarizes the experiences of the officers of his Battalion (the 2nd) in Denmark. "On the whole, we found this a most pleasing expedition. We lived on good terms with the natives of the country, had frequent balls, to which all the best families came and the women are very fair and very handsome, the living being good and cheap and very good Rhinish (*sic*) wine and excellent Hoc (*sic*) to be had everywhere we would willingly have prolonged our stay."¹

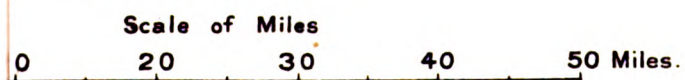
Both 1st and 2nd Battalions upon landing marched to Dover and on to Hythe Barracks where they arrived on 17 November. Here they were joined soon afterwards by the Companies on their return from South America as already described. The whole Regiment was now once again reunited, but it was only to be for a brief period.

¹ Maj.-Gen. W. Cox's MS. Journal, 17.



MAP OF ISLAND OF ZEALAND,

rate Danish Expeditions of April, 1801
and Aug.-Sept., 1807.



CHAPTER XI.

THE MILITARY SITUATION, 1807-08

The Military Situation in Europe in 1807-08—Denmark declares war on England—England's desire to protect Sweden—Negotiations with Russia—Russia declares war on England—Cathcart withdraws from Zealand—North German Ports closed to British trade—Napoleon's wrath at the loss of the Danish Fleet—He orders Portugal to close her Ports against England—England and Portugal form a defensive alliance—Junot enters Spain and marches on Lisbon—Moore is ordered from Sicily to Lisbon—He arrives too late and is ordered home—Fresh treaty between Sweden and England—Russia invades Finland and France enters Holstein—Moore ordered to Gottenberg with 12,000 men—Three Companies of Riflemen from 1st Battalion accompany him—King Gustavus IV. declines Moore's assistance—Moore returns to England with his force—Napoleon over-runs Spain and seizes the frontier fortresses—Outbreak in Madrid—The Spanish Royal Family sent to France—General insurrection throughout Spain—Napoleon's schemes for crushing it—The French suffer reverses—Capitulation of Baylen—Fine defence of Zaragoza—Spanish reverse at Medina del Rio Seco—French barbarities and Spanish reprisals.

IN order to maintain the sequence of this narrative, I have described the fall of Copenhagen and subsequent withdrawal of our troops from Denmark as if the whole business had proceeded smoothly after the armistice of 7 September 1807. As a matter of fact, the fulfilment of our part of the agreement to evacuate Zealand in six weeks was gravely complicated by Denmark having declared war against Great Britain during the progress of the siege. Our Ministers thereupon wanted to keep a force in Zealand and tried to induce Cathcart to obtain some pretext for delaying his withdrawal, but the British General was

See
Map XII.,
p. 220.

not to be led into such shifty manœuvres and finally, as we have seen, embarked all his army for England. That he was right is now generally accepted. To have retained Zealand in order to protect Sweden from Napoleon would have required at least 30,000 of our best troops and a large naval force to keep our sea-communications open, and, in view of the enormous numbers which Napoleon could and undoubtedly would have thrown against our troops ashore, could only have ended in grave troubles and possible disaster. Great Britain was no doubt in an awkward predicament. Denmark was naturally bitterly incensed against England and it was useless to attempt to induce her to oppose France. Moreover it was suspected that she had a private agreement with France; the alliance with Sweden owing to the madness of her King was useless to us and it was absurd to expect Russia to join us in protecting the Swedes and Danes and thus break with France, with whom she had so recently patched up a peace, to please England. Rather as Fortescue puts it, would she be more likely to break with England to please France. And so it was. On 2 November Russia declared war against England and we had yet one more power to contend against. With the withdrawal of England from Stralsund and Zealand there was nothing to prevent Russia from seizing Finland which she had long coveted and Swedish Pomerania and Denmark lay at the mercy of Napoleon. All the ports along the northern coast of Germany were now closed to British trade. But against this England had one good asset, the Danish Fleet was in British ports.

How telling was England's blow at Copenhagen is shown by Napoleon's fury when he heard of it and the steps he immediately took to reply to it. The vastness and comprehensiveness of Napoleon's plans are well shown by his action at this period. He had already two months earlier in July ordered Portugal to close all her ports against England, and to sequester all British property. This he had followed up, a few weeks later in August, by a demand that Portugal should declare war

against Great Britain. The Regent of Portugal, Prince John, finding himself helpless before Napoleon's threats, decided to retire to Brazil rather than be guilty of such faithlessness to an old ally. England now entered into a defensive agreement with Portugal and Napoleon hearing that England contemplated sending 10,000 men from Zealand to occupy Lisbon ordered Marshal Junot with 20,000 men to cross the Spanish Frontier on 19 October and march on that Capital. Next day he declared war on Portugal. By the treaty of Fontainebleau in October, 1807, it was arranged that northern Portugal was to be given to Spain and the remainder of the country was to be held by France. Owing to this arrangement and others unnecessary to recapitulate here, Junot was able to move through Spain without any objection being raised by the Spanish Officials. Now it was that by an extraordinary chance Napoleon was appealed to both by the old King of Spain and his miserable son for help, owing to serious internal troubles. Nothing could have been more timely, for it gave him an excuse for filling Spain with French troops, ostensibly on the way to Portugal but in reality to occupy the most important strategic points.

It is impossible to do more than outline the complications which now ensued. The Portuguese Regent was finally terrified into carrying out Napoleon's orders but England at once sent a squadron of six ships of the line and blockaded the Tagus and eventually on 29 November the Regent, torn by conflicting interests and alarmed for his own safety, sailed for Brazil with 12 Portuguese ships of war and 30 smaller craft escorted by the British Squadron. Junot at the head of the remains of his 20,000 men, who had suffered terribly from over-marching, absence of supplies and bad weather, actually marched into Lisbon whilst the British and Portuguese ships were yet in sight. By this narrow margin only was the Portuguese Fleet saved from the clutches of Napoleon !

Meanwhile on 25 October Sir John Moore with some 8,000 men

of the force he had with him in Sicily sailed to garrison Lisbon but owing to contrary winds did not reach Gibraltar till 1 December. On 8 December when near Lisbon he heard that he was too late to save the city which he undoubtedly could have done had he been sent earlier ; so he returned to Gibraltar and later on was ordered to come to England.

It was now decided to make good the deficiencies of the garrison in Sicily due to the withdrawal of Moore's 8,000 men and Lieut.-General Sir Brent Spencer was instructed to go there with an equal number of troops calling in at the Tagus and at Gibraltar *en route*.

Arriving off the Tagus on 26 February 1808, he of course found Junot in possession and proceeded to Gibraltar. He had been given nebulous instructions to attempt to seize Ceuta and failing this to make a raid on Minorca. He was now ordered to send his foreign troops in our pay, mostly King's German Legion, to make Sicily secure. The reasons for this apparently absurd general change of quarters were simply that the British troops in Sicily were enlisted for general or world-wide service whereas the King's Germans and other foreigners were enlisted for European service only ; and, incredible as it may now seem, our Ministers were still hankering after fresh adventures in South America and hence wished to free the British soldiers in Sicily for that service.

On 8 February Sweden and Great Britain signed a fresh treaty and soon afterwards a British Squadron arrived off the Swedish coast with substantial subsidies of money. In March Russia invaded Finland and Napoleon sent Bernadotte with 10,000 French and 13,000 Spaniards into Holstein. In April England re-inforced her squadron at Gottenburg and Sir John Moore was ordered to proceed thither from England with 12,000 men.

Among Moore's force were included three Companies of the 1st Battalion 95th Rifles, those of Brevet-Major Norcott, Captains Ross and O'Hare which, under the command of Major Gilmour, marched

from Colchester to Harwich on 8 April and embarked next day. These three Companies had only rejoined the 1st Battalion some three months previously after their stormy experiences at Buenos Ayres.

The transport sailed for Yarmouth Roads where the fleet was assembled with the rest of Moore's troops. Moore arrived off Gottenburg on the 17th but he soon found that his task was an impossible one owing to the conduct of King Gustavus who was now bordering on insanity and who forbade his allies the British to land. Moore having gone to Stockholm to see the King, was actually placed under arrest by him! Finding it impossible to deal with such a madman, Sir John made his escape in the dress of a peasant and, taking passage on a fishing boat, got on board the *Victory* on the evening of 29 June.¹ Finally on 3 July the whole of Moore's force sailed for England and arrived in the Downs on the 15th.

Turning now to Spain, where events were maturing rapidly, early in 1808 Napoleon, who had obtained permission from the wretched King to send 40,000 men through Spain to Portugal by giving due notice, with characteristic thoroughness and duplicity now ordered 80,000 to cross the frontier without warning. Dupont and Monecy marched on Burgos whilst Duhesme entered Catalonia and advanced on Barcelona. Having thus over-run Spain peaceably, he by various subterfuges and adroit by-play surprised and occupied the citadels, first of Pamplona and then of Barcelona. S. Sebastian and Figueras, the two frontier posts, were similarly seized without firing a shot.

See Map XII.,
p. 220.

Prince Murat, the Emperor's brother-in-law, who had been appointed General-in-Chief in Spain, now marched on Madrid. Disturbances now broke out in that city for the populace imagined, not without reason, that Napoleon designed to drive out their King as he had driven out the Regent of Portugal. A week later Murat entered Madrid with 25,000 men. How Napoleon subsequently

¹ "Early Military Life of Sir George Napier," 41.

decoyed the luckless King and Queen as well as their worthless son to Bayonne is a matter of history. While there, the citizens of Madrid rose on the French intruders and Murat employed his troops to quell the insurrection of 2 May, the famous "Dos de Mayo," whose name is to this day held in such reverence throughout the Peninsula. Some thousand French were killed and wounded and as many of the inhabitants and Murat had 100 men executed before the revolt was suppressed.

Napoleon who was now at Bayonne compelled the unfortunate old King to surrender his throne to him and his son Ferdinand to abdicate, and the whole Spanish Royal Family were sent into France. Napoleon then caused Murat to induce the Council of Regency to offer the vacant throne to his brother Joseph. On 9 July Joseph entered his new kingdom.

But many weeks before this, the whole Peninsula had burst into revolt. The very weakness of Spain due to the jealousies of the various isolated provinces lent power to this movement, for the insurrection against the hated invaders broke out almost simultaneously in a dozen different regions. First Asturias rose and declared war against Napoleon, next the Galicians seized the arsenals of Coruña and Ferrol. The Provinces of Leon, Aragon, Valencia, Murcia and Andalusia followed suit and in a few weeks the French found themselves beset on every side with their communications severed. For a time neither the Emperor nor Murat realized how serious the position was rapidly becoming. Spain's regular forces were widely scattered with no reference to defensive action; Napoleon had adroitly enough induced the old King to send 15,000 of his best troops to Denmark. There were some 20,000 in Galicia, 25,000 more were in Andalusia, but the balance were too widely scattered and isolated to act as an army and were merely used to stiffen the irregulars.

Napoleon now had 91,000 men in Spain exclusive of the force

in Portugal, of these 25,000 held his line of communication from Burgos to S. Sebastian, 13,000 were in Catalonia and 53,000 about Madrid. The broad principles of his strategy for reducing Spain to submission were, first to conquer Andalusia and deny Cadiz to his inveterate foes the English; for the moment he elected to ignore the Galician forces. But he desired also to possess Zaragoza which barred the road from Madrid to Barcelona and which would secure his communications eastward to the Pyrenees and assist him in the conquest of Valencia and Murcia and the possession of Cartagena, yet another seaport. Northward the harbour of Santander demanded protection since it was a vulnerable point where an enemy like England was concerned. To this general scheme of conquest the Spanish forces, considering their ill-training and want of discipline, made a noteworthy resistance.

Moncey marched with 9,000 men to Valencia and attempted to storm that city but was repulsed with very heavy loss after two successive attacks and had to fall back on Madrid. Dupont's two Divisions, although no serious opposition was offered, stormed and sacked Cordoba. He now heard that General Castaños with 25,000 men reinforced by a British force about to land at Cadiz (evidently Brent Spencer's who was at Gibraltar) was advancing to attack him. Accordingly after nine days at Cordoba he retreated on Madrid. At Baylen on the Guadalquivir he was joined by Vedel and later by Gobert which brought his force up to 22,000 men. Here he gave battle to Castaños but was defeated and on 23 July surrendered with 18,000 men. Such was the famous battle or rather capitulation of Baylen. The French was thus uniformly unsuccessful in the south; in the north Merle, who had been sent towards Santander, attacked Cuesta who commanded a rabble army near Valladolid and dispersed it without any trouble.

But in the east Napoleon was again thwarted, for the open city

of Zaragoza resisted three separate attempts to storm it between June and August and upon the news of Baylen reaching the French commander, he abandoned the siege, destroyed his guns and ammunition and with his 17,000 defeated soldiers fell back on Tudela. The little fortress of Gerona in Catalonia made an equally gallant defence. Thus was Napoleon thwarted on every side. But what the bravery of the Spaniards could effect was spoilt by the incapacity of their Generals and the incompetence of their rulers and as a set off to the French disasters, Cuesta of evil memory came out of the Galician mountains where he was doing good service as a menace to Napoleon's communications and induced Blake to join him and offer battle to Bessières on the plains below at Medina del Rio Seco. As if to ensure defeat they divided their forces into two parts which Bessières had little trouble in routing in detail. Blake retreated into the Galician Mountains near Astorga and Cuesta into the Asturias. The Army of Galicia was thus for a time rendered non-effective. During these untoward events Joseph had entered Madrid on 20 July ; but a few days earlier the defeated Moncey had arrived there and some days later he got news of Baylen. So it was that on 1 August he and his Court retreated northwards on Burgos accompanied by the 20,000 troops about Madrid.

Meanwhile the barbarities committed by the French had brought their inevitable reprisals. Of all European races the Spaniards are perhaps the easiest raised to actions of cruelty and the French found themselves engaged in a war where every detached party captured, every patrol, straggler or sick and wounded man who fell into the hands of the Spaniards, was put to death, frequently after being tortured in the most appalling manner. Nor can we blame the inhabitants, for from Dupont's sack of Cordoba onward the French showed the utmost savagery and as a consequence the war between these two nations was conducted with a ferocity happily unknown in British armies. This

preliminary campaign of Napoleon's in Spain is reckoned to have cost him 40,000 men including the 20,000 captured at Baylen.

I have been at some pains thus to recapitulate the general movements of the French and Spanish forces in the Peninsula before the arrival of the British Army in the theatre of war since without some knowledge of these it is most difficult to account for much which took place subsequently. Also it is a plain act of justice to the gallant race who despite years of misgovernment, an entire absence of strategical control or of good tactical leading, both higher and lower, and largely without military training or organization, withstood and defeated the highly trained victorious legions of France. These preliminary successes of the Spaniards were no doubt largely due to the initial separation of the French forces. When later on in the war the French concentrated their armies, the Spaniards learnt the lesson that gallantry and patriotism will not make way against discipline and numbers.

But in addition to the foregoing there is a second reason, and one more pertinent to this story of the deeds of the Rifle Regiment in the Peninsular War, why I have entered into these details of the strategical situation in August, 1808. For I hope by these means to give more coherence to my subsequent narrative and to avoid referring to matters of general strategy save in the briefest manner, when describing the events in which our Riflemen bore so conspicuous a part during the momentous six years of fighting which followed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE PENINSULAR WAR; OBIDOS
AND ROLIÇA, 1808.

Sir Brent Spencer's Expedition—The Portuguese rise against the French invaders—The British Government decide upon an expedition to Portugal—Sir Arthur Wellesley sails with 5,000 men—Sir John Moore and 11,000 men are ordered to follow—Appointment of Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard—Wellesley arrives at Mondego Bay—Sir Brent Spencer reinforces him—The 2nd Battalion 95th Rifles land—Wellesley brigades his assembled Troops—The 5th Battalion 60th brigaded with the 95th—Wellesley's G.O. as regards the formation of the British Order of Battle and the *rôle* of the Riflemen—The landing in Mondego Bay—Marshal Junot's measures to oppose Wellesley—The affair at Obidos—Death of Lieutenant Ralph Bunbury—Over-eagerness of the Riflemen—Wellesley advances on Roliça—Delaborde falls back to his second position—The Battle of Roliça—Losses in the action—Wellesley's commendation.

See
Map VIII.,
p. 168.

DURING Sir John Moore's absence at Gottenburg Sir Brent Spencer had been despatched to Gibraltar, as we have seen, with 8,000 men, of whom he had sent on 4,000 to Sicily. The arrival of the Spanish Deputies from the Asturias asking for England's aid to oust the French, completely changed the situation and the Government dropped its wild and ill-considered schemes of attacking Spain and directed its energies to support the national effort to turn the French out of the Peninsula. Sir Hew Dalrymple at Gibraltar most fortunately forestalled the action of the Government and early in June he sent Spencer with 5,000 men to Cadiz, where our new allies were afraid to admit him ! Spencer after cruising up to the Tagus heard

on 15 July of the assemblage of a British Expedition at Cork under Wellesley and, of his own accord, sailed to meet it off the coast of Portugal.

In June Portugal rose against the French invaders and Junot was, for lack of numbers, constrained to concentrate about Lisbon and to endeavour to quell the insurrection in Central Portugal.

The British Cabinet finally decided to commence operations by clearing Portugal of the French, and in May a force of over 5,000 men was assembled on transports at Cork under Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Wellesley and sailed about 13 July. Five thousand more men under Brigadiers Acland and Anstruther were embarked at Ramsgate and Harwich, and Moore with 11,000 of his troops just returned from the Baltic was directed to follow as a reinforcement. Owing to political intrigues which do not concern this history the Cabinet wished to prevent Sir John Moore from commanding our forces in Spain and so selected two Lieutenant-Generals, both of them Guardsmen, Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard, and both senior to Moore, as Commander and Second-in-Command.

Wellesley arrived on 20 July at Coruña and after seeing the Junta there proceeded to Oporto where he heard that the fort of Figueira, 100 miles north of Lisbon, had been garrisoned by Admiral Cotton with 400 British Marines. This decided Wellesley to land at Mondego Bay. First proceeding to the Tagus, he sent word to Spencer to join him and then sailed back to Mondego Bay, arriving there on 30 July. He had learnt that Junot had detached General Loison with 7,000 men into Alemtejo and as he reckoned Junot to have only 14,000 troops in hand during Loison's absence, he decided to disembark at once in boats on the open coast. Junot actually had 19,000 men available.

I must now trace the movements of the detachment or the Rifle Regiment which formed part of Wellesley's force. On 8 June

four Companies of the 2nd Battalion under Major Travers embarked at Dover and sailed for Cork, where Wellesley's force was assembling. The strength of these Companies was 1 Field Officer, 4 Captains, 13 Subalterns, 1 Staff, 20 Sergeants, 8 Buglers and 399 Riflemen. Sailing with the convoy on 12 July they arrived off the mouth of the Douro on the 24th. Here the fleet "lay to" whilst communication was made with the shore and then for the first time our men became aware that they were to act against the French in Portugal. Two days later, on the 26th, the fleet of transports anchored in Mondego Bay off the small town of Figueira. There was a heavy swell from the Atlantic which caused the transports to roll most unpleasantly. On the night of the 27th the towns and villages near the coast were illuminated in honour of the arrival of the British Army to assist them. The 30th and 31st July were passed in getting up the arms from the hold, where in these days of make-shift transports, they were perforce stored, also in making all preparations for the disembarkation, which included the cooking of three days' provisions.

Captain Leach describes the discomforts attendant on this disembarkation.

Although the weather was perfectly calm, I never remember to have experienced more motion in a gale of wind, than we felt during the six days spent at this anchorage. The long and heavy swell made the yards of the ship at times almost touch the water, as she rolled from side to side, which caused some awful breakages among our wine-glasses and crockery.

On the 1st of August, Brigadier-General Fane's Brigade, consisting of the 45th Regiment, the 5th Battalion of the 60th (German riflemen) and our own four companies, disembarked at the mouth of the Mondego river. . . .¹

Wellesley had provisionally divided his infantry into six Brigades consisting of two to three Battalions apiece. The 6th or Light Brigade under Brigadier-General Fane was composed as above, the 5th Battalion

¹ "Rough Sketches." Leach, 41.

of the 60th being nearly 1,000 strong and the four Companies of the 2nd Battalion, 95th Rifle Regiment, numbering 400. As this was the first occasion when our Riflemen met those of the 60th it may be of interest to record here the circumstances which brought them together. This 5th Battalion, as described in Chapter I, had been formed for service in America in the early months of the year 1798 out of two foreign regiments of *chasseurs* and *jäger* at that time in British pay. It was consequently composed almost entirely of foreigners who were prohibited by law from serving in Great Britain. In 1804 and again in 1806 Acts were passed allowing the enlisted subjects of Foreign States to serve in England during the continuance of the war. In November 1806 the 5th Battalion 60th was brought from America to England and in the following summer sent to Ireland under orders for the Mediterranean, and in July 1808 it formed part of Wellesley's force destined for Portugal, where we now find it. From its first formation its dress had been green jackets with blue pantaloons. The services performed by the 5th Battalion 60th are known to all. Most unfortunately this Battalion was disbanded upon the reduction of the Army in 1818, at the same time that our 3rd Battalion, raised in 1809, suffered a like hard fate.

On 1 August Wellesley commenced his disembarkation. All along this coast there is usually a heavy surf and it was no easy matter to land the men, let alone the guns, horses and supplies. Many boats were swamped and several men drowned and it took five days to land his 9,000 men with their few horses, guns and stores. The four companies of the 2nd Battalion 95th were landed first. When Fane's Brigade was all ashore, it was pushed on southward, keeping its right to the sea, across an uninterrupted plain of white sand, "hot enough almost to have dressed a beefsteak, into which we sunk ankle deep at every step."¹ The Riflemen, many of whom had now been

¹ Leach, 42.

on board since 8 April, nearly four months, were far from being in good marching trim. After marching about six miles, Fane's Brigade encamped in a pinewood near the village of Lavos, where they were glad to get some shade from the fierce rays of the August sun. Piquets were posted and patrols sent out. On 2 August they were joined by Ferguson's Brigade and during the three following days the rest of the troops landed, camp equipment was brought up and the little force was all placed under canvas.

It was at this stage of the campaign that Wellesley published on 3 August a memorable General Order.

LAVOS 3 August 1808.

G.O.

The *Order of Battle* of the Army is to be *two deep* and as follows, beginning from the right:—

Major-General Ferguson's Brigade.

Brigadier-General Catlin Craufurd's Ditto.

Brigadier-General Fane's Ditto; on the left.

There will be a howitzer and three pieces of cannon attached to each of the Brigades of infantry. . . .

When the Army moves from its left, the 95th and 5th Battalion 60th will lead the column in the ordinary course. When the Army shall move from its right, the 95th and 5th Battalion 60th must form the advanced Guard and lead the column from the right.¹ . . .

This G.O. is of interest to all British soldiers, since it marked the definite adoption of a line two-deep in the British Army, which hitherto had been usually formed in three ranks.² The results of this reduction in depth and consequent increase in front by one-half³ and corresponding development of *fire-effect* were very far reaching and were

¹ Supp. Desp., vi., 96. ² Two ranks had been employed occasionally before this.

³ A company of 120 men standing in three ranks, each file occupying two feet, occupy about 27 yards of front. By reducing the number of ranks to two, the frontage is obviously increased from 40 men to 60 men, that is from 27 yards to 40 yards (an increase of 50 per cent.).

shortly to be exhibited to the whole world on many a bloody field in Portugal and Spain.

The second point, which will impress itself on all Riflemen is that Fane's Brigade, consisting exclusively of riflemen, was to be "on the left." Reference to the order will show that it was immaterial what other brigades joined the command, the Brigade of Riflemen was always to be "on the left"; just as the 1st Guards Regiment, now the Grenadiers, was always "on the right" of a line of Infantry. The third point is that, no matter whether the Army "moved from its left" or "its right," the Brigade of Riflemen were always to precede it and form the advance guard.

Some may affect to scoff at such refinements in military traditions. Let them scoff. It is the knowledge that a great leader like Wellesley, in the midst of most urgent work and with the burden of the whole credit and honour of our arms, for the time, resting on his efforts, found it advisable to frame these rules and regulations. Nothing can overcome the plain fact that Wellesley in 1808 thought it necessary thus to define the rôle of the 95th Rifle Regiment.

Seven days later on 7 August Major-General Spencer with five Battalions of Infantry and a Squadron of the 20th Light Dragoons arrived. Three more days were occupied in disembarking this force. The landing of the 15,000 men which now composed Wellesley's force thus took eight days. Wellesley now re-arranged his Brigades; the 6th or Light Brigade was ordered to consist of the 2nd Battalion 95th and the 5th Battalion 60th under Brigadier-General Fane with Brigade-Major M'Neil and Assist. Com. Lamont as Staff officers.¹ On 9 August at 3 a.m. Fane with his Brigade advanced from Lavos southward on Leiria. His orders were that if he found the French in that place he was not to molest them until the following day. The tents were left behind and the baggage was still on board ship,

¹ Supp. Desp., vi., 101.

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the men carried their knapsacks and the officers "carried a few indispensable articles on their backs."¹ The men suffered much from the intense heat and the absence of water.

Large pinewoods, growing on an arid white sandy soil, occasionally varied by uncultivated heaths, with here and there a vineyard, constituted the chief features of the country traversed.² A considerable portion of the route lay along lanes between high hedge-rows or prickly pears which shut out the breeze and rendered the march most trying. At nightfall the Riflemen bivouacked on the slope of a hill amid the gum cistus. On the 10th, soon after daybreak, the advance was resumed, some of the 20th Dragoons and 200 Riflemen forming the advance guard. Some deserters from the 4th Swiss Regiment clad in long red coats came in and reported the French as having retired from Leiria.³ General Fane pushed on and entered the town which bore terrible marks of their cruelty and excesses.

It would be well now to review the forces which Marshal Junot could muster to oppose Wellesley's advance and the steps he had taken to assemble them. He got news of the landing in Mondego Bay on the very day it commenced and at once sent orders to Loison, who with 7,000 men was near Badajoz, to rejoin him. On 6 August he sent out Delaborde with about 2,500 men² and 5 light guns from Lisbon to delay Wellesley, if possible, until he could gather in his scattered forces. Delaborde advanced to Alcobaca on the 10th, and was joined there by three Battalions from Peniche about 2,500 strong bringing up his total force to some 5,000, and pushed on to Batalha to see if the position there was suitable to oppose Wellesley's advance. Finding the country here to be much wooded and broken, he fell back, first on Obidos

¹ Major-General J. Cox, MS. Journal.

² Leach, 43.

³ MS. Journal, J. Cox.

3 miles north of Roliça,¹ where he left a rear-guard consisting of an infantry detachment and a few cavalry, and then to Roliça. Thence he detached six companies of Swiss troops to garrison Peniche, thus reducing his total fighting force to 4,350 men.² Meanwhile Wellesley, leaving his tents and heavy baggage at Leiria on the 14th, advanced through Batalha to Alcobaca and on the 15th to Caldas.

AFFAIR AT OBIDOS.

When a short distance south of Caldas Major Travers, who was in command of the advance guard consisting of the four companies of the Rifles and four of the 5th Battalion 60th, received orders to push on and dislodge the enemy's outposts, which were reported to be holding the small town of Obidos, some three miles to the south. The advance of the advance guard consisted of Captain Hon. Hercules Pakenham's Company (No. 4) of the 2nd Battalion and three companies of the 5th Battalion 60th, as well as an officers' party of the 20th Light Dragoons. The following is an extract from Lieut. John Cox's Journal³:—

"On approaching the place, the enemy opened a fire of musketry from a windmill on a rising ground adjoining the place, and a few shots came from the town; however, a rapid advance of the Riflemen drew the French from all points of their posts, but being rather too elevated with this, our first collision with the foe, we dashed along the plain after them like young soldiers, but we were soon brought up by a body of French cavalry advancing from the main force. A retrograde movement was now imperative, in which we lost an officer and a few men."

¹ Mis-spelt Roleia, by War Office clerks in 1808. When in 1821-22 the "Honours" for the Peninsular War were granted to the Regiment six out of the eight names of Battles were mis-spelt and remain so on all "Colours and Appointments" in the Army to this day.

² Oman. i., 235.

³ MS. Journal, J. Cox.

The remaining companies of Riflemen had by this time joined the advanced party ; among those of the 95th was Captain Leach's (No. 3) Company.

The infantry Battalion which formed the reserve of Delaborde's rear-guard now came up and the Riflemen found themselves in a very awkward predicament for the French were vastly more numerous and attempted to cut them off. Fortunately Major-General Spencer who had heard of the affair pushed on with his Brigade and thus extricated them but not without some difficulty. In this sharp skirmish Lieutenant Ralph Bunbury was killed. He was shot through the head at the very commencement of the affair and was the first British Officer to fall in the Peninsular War ; he had just four years' service. Captain Pakenham was wounded, whilst 3 Riflemen were killed, 2 wounded and 1 was missing.¹ The 60th had 1 man killed, 5 wounded and 17 missing.²

Wellesley in a letter to the Secretary of State on 16 August said : " The affair of the advanced posts of yesterday evening was unpleasant, because it was quite useless ; and was occasioned, contrary to orders, solely by the imprudence of the Officer, and the dash and eagerness of the men : they behaved remarkably well and did some execution with their rifles.³ Writing to the Duke of Richmond on the same date he says : " We had yesterday evening a little affair of advanced posts, foolishly brought on by the over-eagerness of the Riflemen in the pursuit of an enemy's piquet, in which we lost Lieutenant Bunbury of the 95th, killed, and Pakenham, slightly wounded, and some men of the 95th and 60th. The troops behaved remarkably well, but not with great prudence."⁴

That night the British advanced posts bivouacked on an extensive knoll near the road along which the French had retired. At day-

¹ Pay Lists and Muster Rolls, 1808.

² Well. Desp., iv., 94.

³ " Celer et Audax," Rigaud, 36.

⁴ Supp. Desp., vi., 115.

light they occupied the village of Obidos and remained there until the morning of the 17th.

Whilst regretting the losses in this affair, it is a question whether the lesson, severe as it was, was not worth the cost. It at least proved that our Riflemen were possessed of the true spirit, keenness and determination to close on the foe. At the same time it taught them the lesson that against good troops such as the French it could do no good and might do much harm, thus to get out of hand and attempt to win fights without any support. The principal culprit was of course Major Robert Travers. He had seen fighting with the 79th in Holland before he joined the Rifle Corps in 1800, had been wounded at Ferrol, had served with Sir Ralph Abercromby in Egypt in 1801 and had been again wounded and taken prisoner at Buenos Ayres in 1807. So he at least had plenty of war experience and we are forced to the conclusion either that he was an extremely pugnacious officer or that his men from over-confidence got a trifle out of hand, probably both.

BATTLE OF ROLIÇA.

On the night of 15 August the British bivouacked on some rising ground near the high road to the north of Obidos and at daylight on the 16th as already described they entered the village. Here they remained until the morn of the 17th since Wellesley had to wait for his supplies to overtake him. Delaborde was at Roliça, three miles south of Obidos with his outposts on the high ground two miles to his front.

See
Map VII.,
p. 154.

Loison had meanwhile received Junot's urgent summons when at Elvas, before Badajoz, and was marching in hot haste to join Delaborde. On the 9th he reached Abrantes, but was compelled to halt for two days owing to the exhausted condition of his men. He reached

Santarem on the 13th and once again had to halt for similar reasons and it was not until the evening of the 16th that he reached Alcoentre some 15 miles east of Obidos. Delaborde apparently hoped to delay Wellesley's advance until he was joined by Loison. Anyway he decided to fight a delaying action at Roliça although his numbers were small, far smaller even than Wellesley, who put them at 6,000, imagined, for he had with him but five Battalions of Infantry, about 250 Light Cavalry and 5 Guns.¹ Against this Wellesley had about 14,000 British troops and 1,600 Portuguese or a total strength of very nearly 4 to 1.

Delaborde's dispositions were excellent. He occupied a first or delaying position on a knoll at the village of Roliça rising about 100 ft. above the level dusty plain, thereby hoping to make Wellesley deploy for action and occupy some time in doing so. Nor was he disappointed, the British Commander having reconnoitred the French position from the belfry of the church in Obidos, decided to advance and envelop it, a proceeding which his great superiority in numbers enabled him to do. Three roads lead south from Obidos. Along the easternmost of these Wellesley sent General Ferguson with two Brigades of Infantry and a Battery, so as to guard himself from a flank attack from Loison, should the latter arrive, and to envelop Delaborde's right. Trant and the Portuguese were sent along the western road to threaten the French left and Wellesley himself with four Brigades of Infantry and two Batteries pushed on along the centre road.

Wellesley's force marched out at 7 a.m. so as to be ready to deploy for attack, Hill's Brigade moving at an interval of about half a mile on his right, while Fane's Brigade of Riflemen was extended and moved through the hills on his left, so as to keep up communication and also to cover the interval between him and Ferguson on his left (about 1 to 1½ miles). Three Companies of the 60th were sent to join

¹ Oman, i., 235.

Ferguson and the remaining seven with Travers' four companies of the 95th, altogether rather over 1,000 strong, served to cover this interval.

The French outposts were driven in by the advancing riflemen and fell back rapidly and Wellesley, upon nearing Delaborde's position, deployed and the riflemen pushed forward in a long skirmishing line, the 60th on the right and the 95th on the left, and gained the hills on his right flank. Marshal Foy describes how Wellesley's main body came on slowly, but in beautiful order, dressing at intervals to correct the gaps caused by the inequalities of ground and all converging on the hill of Roliça.¹

Delaborde seems to have handled his men very well for he held on until Trant on his left and Ferguson on his right were on either flank of him, whilst his own Voltigeurs on his right were sharply engaged with our Riflemen. Then it was that, under cover of his skirmishers' fire he made a rapid retreat to the main or second position where he had decided all along to make a serious stand. This position was on some heights one mile south of Roliça rising in steep and broken spurs some 500 ft. above a stream flowing down a ravine which secured his left flank. The right flank was to some extent protected by another stream. The hillsides are exceedingly steep and broken, with masses of bare rock protruding from the scrub, and high heath and fir-trees scattered over all.

Wellesley had now to begin his work all over again; he at once ordered Trant and Ferguson to proceed as before and turn both of Delaborde's flanks and it was his intention, as soon as the formidable position held by the French should be thus rendered insecure, to make a vigorous frontal attack upon it. And now came one of those episodes so familiar to all who have seen war or who have studied military history. Although the main British deployed line had halted and broken off the action with the retiring French, it appears that Fane's

¹ Foy, iv., 309.

Riflemen, who were in touch with the French Voltigeurs in very broken ground, had hung on to them and followed them up to the new position. A regiment on their right, the 29th, either in an attempt to co-operate or through the determination of its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Lake, to close with the enemy without delay, pushed on and made an isolated and altogether premature attack up a gully on the rugged hill-side. By a chance of war they encountered a regiment of Swiss in the French Service, which luckily, instead of opposing them, commenced to fraternize. But this moment a French Battalion appeared on their flank and charging them furiously drove them shattered down the hill. Lake was slain and many prisoners taken. Wellesley seeing this unfortunate attack, in order to extricate the 29th, ordered a general advance of the troops immediately with him. The 5th Regiment thereupon attacked vigorously on the French left whilst the 60th and 95th pressed forward on their right. The 29th rallied and in company with the 9th Regiment renewed their attack on the centre. Meanwhile the British Artillery was well served and did much execution, whilst our Infantry fought with great determination. The day was intensely hot, the hillsides held by the Voltigeurs were very steep and much cut up by vineyards and enclosures.

General Delaborde had been compelled to detach three companies to guard his right flank from Ferguson's threatened enveloping attack, hence he had with him only four Battalions. But with these he made a fine defence and on three successive occasions charged and drove back the British infantry as they arrived breathless and in disorder at the crest of the hill and endeavoured to form into line. Lieutenant J. Cox describes how "by this time the Riflemen on the left were considerably forward, having been sharply engaged throughout with large bodies of Voltigeurs who were strongly posted in the steep hills, vineyards and enclosures from which they were successively driven." Leach's account of the attack and capture of the heights is as

follows: "The 60th and ourselves attacked the enemy's right and threw in so destructive a fire on their columns, such as we could get within shot of, as to make them retreat in great disorder. You cannot conceive nor can anyone who was not present on that day the situation of ourselves and the 60th. We had to ascend first one mountain so covered with brushwood that our legs were ready to sink under us, the enemy on the top of it lying down in the heath keeping up a hot and constant fire in our face and the men dropping all round us. Before we could gain the summit the French had retreated to the next hill when they again lay concealed and kept up a running galling fire on us as we ascended. Having beaten them off the second hill and taken possession of it the enemy retreated to a wood, there being a valley between us and it and recommenced a most tremendous fire, having received a reinforcement. The action now became very severe. About this time I had a most providential escape. I was almost faint with anxiety to get the men properly placed and with the immense heat and fatigue. In short I was like most of the others, completely fagged and would have given a guinea for one mouthful of water, when one of our officers asked me if I would take a mouthful of wine. He held his canteen to my mouth and it was not there a second when a shot went through his hand and the canteen which was in my mouth and covered my face with wine. The poor fellow dropped immediately. I left a soldier with him and proceeded with my company, pitying the Officer who was wounded but fully convinced that the ball was better through his hand than my head which has proved to be the case as he is quite recovered. The action lasted till about five or six in the evening in which time I am sorry to say we lost many a gallant officer and soldier as Sir A. Wellesley's Dispatches will show. My servant whom I have had ever since I came to the Regiment was killed, poor fellow. We had three officers wounded."

¹ Extract from a letter by Jonathan Leach, written apparently a few days after Vimeiro. Colonel Leach kept no Diary during the campaign of 1808.

Our men pressed on, driving the French from one stony gully to another, at places working through heath and scrub which hid their enemy from them. At one time they came under a very heavy fire from two houses held by the French light troops and their advance was checked. At last the Riflemen could stand it no longer and a daring fellow, sprang up and leaping a wall in front shouted "Over, boys! Over! Over!" In an instant every one near him was dashing forwards with shouts of "Over! Over!" fixing their swords to their rifles as they struggled up the hill-side. The Voltigeurs seeing this, turned and fled and the Riflemen soon entered and cleared the houses of the enemy.¹

It was about this time that Ferguson's Brigade appeared on Delaborde's flank and the latter at once commenced to withdraw his force. He conducted his retirement splendidly, his four infantry Battalions retiring by pairs alternately, covered by his small force of cavalry, which constantly threatened the advancing British troops. About a mile in rear of the position he had held so gallantly was the scattered village and defile of Zambugeira. Here he was hard pressed losing three of his five guns and leaving many wounded men prisoners in our hands. Wellesley pushed on after him a little further and then abandoned the pursuit, Delaborde falling back to Montechique. It is probable that Wellesley's anxiety to dispose of Delaborde's force before Loison could reinforce him may have influenced his movements, but as events proved Loison was a great deal farther off than Wellesley's reports had led him to believe and could not possibly have put in an appearance in time.

The French losses in this affair were 600 killed and wounded, among the latter being Delaborde. The British losses were 4 officers and 67 men killed and 20 officers and 315 men wounded as well as 4 officers and 68 men missing. The total casualties were thus 487 out of a total of about 5,000 men engaged. For it must be noted that although Wellesley's force was so greatly superior, the attack on the

¹ Rifleman Harris, 37.

French position was made by only $4\frac{1}{2}$ Battalions. Wellesley in his despatch said "although we had such superiority in numbers employed in the operations of this day, the troops actually engaged in the heat of the action were, from unavoidable circumstances, only the 5th, 9th, 29th, the Riflemen of the 95th and 60th, and the flank Companies of Major General Hill's Brigade; being a number by no means equal to that of the enemy. Their conduct therefore deserves the highest commendation."¹ Brigadier-General Fane was mentioned in despatches for the manner in which he had led the attack of the Riflemen.

The same day that this despatch was written, Wellesley published a General Order as follows²:—

LOURINHA,

18 August 1808.

G. O.

The Lieutenant-General was perfectly satisfied with the conduct of the troops in action yesterday, particularly with the gallantry displayed by the 5th, 9th, 29th, 60th, and 95th, to whose lot it principally fell to engage the enemy

The losses of the Rifle Regiment on this memorable day, memorable in being the first action fought by Sir Arthur Wellesley in the Peninsular War, were as follows: Killed, 1 Sergeant and 16 Riflemen. Wounded, Captain Jasper Creagh, Lieutenants D. St. L. Hill and Thomas Cochrane, and 3 Sergeants and 30 Riflemen, making a total of 50 casualties.³ The losses of the 5th Battalion 60th were 3 officers wounded, 8 men killed, 39 wounded, and 16 missing.⁴ The 29th Regiment lost no less than 190 out of about 900 all ranks.

Delaborde has been blamed for standing to fight and incurring such losses. This must ever be a matter of opinion. What is

¹ Well. Desp., iv., 99.

² Supp. Desp., vi., 119.

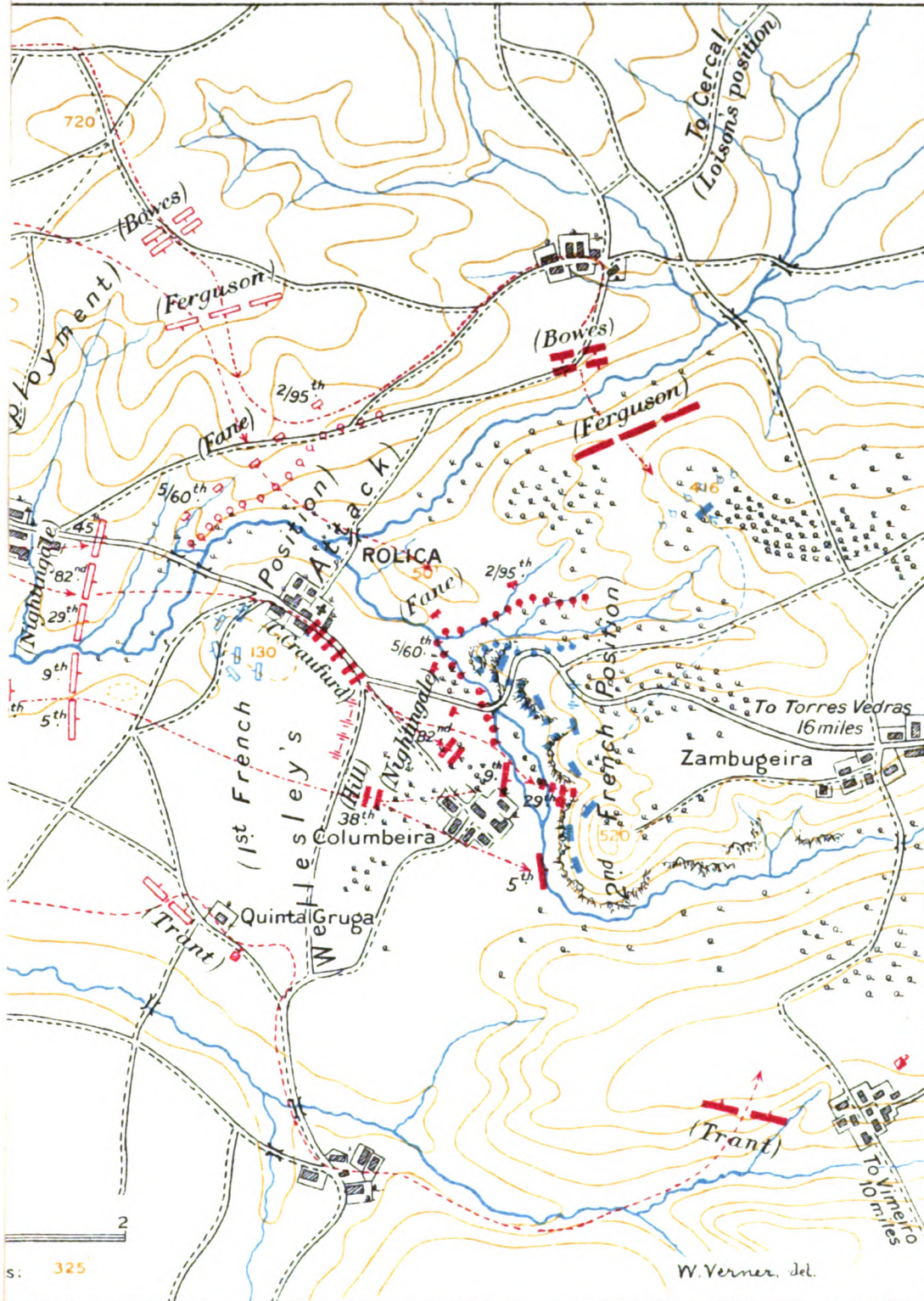
³ Records 2nd Battalion.

⁴ "Celer et Audax," Rigaud, 38.

certain is that he showed remarkable skill in taking full advantage of the ground both to conceal his dispositions and to effect the withdrawal of his troops and that the Duke of Wellington always regarded his victory at Roliça as an important event in his long roll of military achievements. Writing to the Duke of Richmond on the day after the battle he says : "The action was a most desperate one between the troops engaged. I never saw such fighting as in the pass by the 29th and 9th, or in the three attacks made by the French in the mountains. These were in their best style. . ." ¹

¹ Supp. Desp., vi., 118.

MAP VII.



CHAPTER XIII.

BATTLE OF VIMEIRO AND CONVENTION OF CINTRA, 1808.

Junot advances from Lisbon to oppose Wellesley—Arrival of British reinforcements at Maceira Bay—The position at Vimeiro—Wellesley's dispositions—The Rifles and 60th hold the outpost line—Junot advances to the attack—His dispositions—The attacks on Vimeiro Hill by Thomières' and Charlot's Brigades repulsed—Attacks renewed by the massed Grenadiers—Shrapnel shell used in action for first time—Share of the Rifles in repelling both attacks—Junot's outflanking movement defeated—The French fall back at all points—Arrival of Sir Harry Burrard—The advance of the victorious British arrested—Losses in the Battle—The French officer's account of his experiences of British Riflemen in action—Arrival of Sir Hew Dalrymple—The British Army halts—The armistice and Convention of Cintra—Junot and his army embark—Strong feeling in England—The Court of Enquiry—Burrard and Dalrymple are superseded.

IT was not until the very day of the affair at Obidos that Marshal Junot tardily decided to advance from Lisbon to the support of his two lieutenants, Loison and Delaborde. On 15 August, leaving a garrison of 3,000 men to hold the capital, he advanced and after several delays and counter-marches caused by the conflicting reports he received as to the movements of the British he joined Loison on the 17th at Cercal. Here, although he could hear the guns at Roliça, he was too far off to support Delaborde. Next day, he and Loison fell back on Torres Vedras, where, on the 19th he was joined by Delaborde from Montechique.

There are two roads leading from Roliça to Lisbon the most direct being that by Montechique, the other following the coast by Vimeiro

and Mafra, and Junot was uncertain which of these Wellesley would elect to follow and so remained halted. But on the 20th he heard that the British were advancing along the coast road and he decided to attack them without delay. His available force was about 10,300 infantry, 2,000 cavalry with 700 artillerymen and train and 26 guns, making a grand total of about 13,000.¹ His force was divided into four Infantry Brigades and a Cavalry Division. Having gathered in all available reinforcements in order to complete these numbers he, on the night of the 20th, made a march of 10 miles and by dawn on the 21st was within four miles of the British force.

Wellesley since the action at Roliça had received strong reinforcements, namely, Anstruther's and Acland's Brigades, which had arrived off Peniche on the 18th and had been ordered to proceed to the mouth of the Maceira river, 12 miles south of Roliça. Wellesley now marched to Lourinha on the 18th and on the 19th reached Vimeiro, a small town on the Maceira, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the sea. Here he took up a position to cover the disembarkation. On 20th, Anstruther's Brigade was landed, there was a heavy surf and many boats were capsized and several men drowned. In the afternoon a part of Acland's Brigade also landed, the remainder did not get ashore until the following day, too late to take part in the action.

This disembarkation on 20 August 1808 is a memorable incident in the story of the Light Division for with Anstruther's Brigade came the 1st Battalion of the 43rd Light Infantry, 721 strong, and the 2nd Battalion of the 52nd Light Infantry, 654 strong, whilst with Acland came two Companies (Captains Cameron's and Ramadge's) of the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Regiment, 200 strong, which had embarked at Harwich early in July under Lieut.-Colonel Beckwith. Four com-

¹ These numbers are taken from Mr. Oman's excellent analysis of the strength of the French at Vimeiro (vol. i, 246-247). Marshal Foy gives it at 11,500; Wellesley estimated it at 14,000.

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panies of our 2nd Battalion were on outpost duty covering the position near Vimeiro and before many hours the three Regiments which were destined to become such close comrades during the following six years were for the first time united and fighting the French.

BATTLE OF VIMEIRO.

The covering position Wellesley had taken up faced eastward and being little over two miles from the sea was certainly not an ideal one to hold, should a retreat from it become necessary. Wellesley was, however, absolutely confident in his powers to defeat Junot and had arranged to advance on the 22nd and would certainly have done so had not he himself been attacked on the previous day. His force now consisted of 16,312 British Infantry, 240 Cavalry and 18 guns with 2,000 Portuguese under Trant.¹ His position at Vimeiro was along some heights facing south-east and extended for about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles. These heights are divided by a narrow valley through which runs the Maceira stream, near whose banks lies the little town of Vimeiro. The heights west of this ravine are very strong whilst those on the east, although somewhat open to an outflanking attack from the east, are also eminently defensible. Immediately south of the town there is a small hill, which forms an excellent advanced post against an attack from the south and is flanked on both sides, although at somewhat long range for the ordnance of a century ago, by the heights forming the main position. The ground, although fairly open in places, is somewhat broken and cut up by vineyards and is at places wooded and overgrown with scrub.

See Map IX,
p. 170.

Wellesley's dispositions for the defence were as follows: The small hill south of Vimeiro which he justly viewed as the key of the position was confided to Fane's and Anstruther's Brigades reinforced by

¹ Oman, i., 251. Napier's estimate gave about 1,800 too many to the British and 350 too few to the Portuguese. In this case, as in others, Mr. Oman's careful researches and deductions are invaluable.

6 guns. With Fane were the four Companies of the 2nd Battalion of the Rifle Regiment, now reduced to 354, with the 5th Battalion 60th, 604 strong and the 50th Regiment. With Anstruther were the 43rd and 52nd as already stated. Hill's Brigade with four other Brigades and 8 guns held the western heights whilst Acland's was posted on the eastern heights about half a mile north of Vimeiro. In rear of Vimeiro, in reserve, were posted Ferguson's Brigade and Trant's Portuguese and four guns.

Whilst Wellesley was engaged in thus marshalling his forces, he received the unpleasant news of the arrival of Lieut.-General Sir Harry Burrard in Maceira Bay and of his own supersession. He at once rode down to the shore and went off through the surf to call on his new Chief. Sir Harry told him that he intended to sleep on board and to land on the following morning. So Wellesley returned through the surf to his little army which he was thus unexpectedly permitted to retain command of for yet a few hours more.

Wellesley had thrown out a line of outposts under Fane to cover his front south of Vimeiro. Piquets of the Rifle Regiment and of the 60th occupied the wooded heights east of the Maceira stream. Some miles to the front of these on the road to Torres Vedras were the vedettes of the 20th Light Dragoons. It is not hard to see from these dispositions as well as from those on the heights that Wellesley expected that the main attack would come from the south. Here, however, he was mistaken, for Junot elected to leave the British right alone and directed his main attack on its centre whilst he attempted at the same time to outflank and roll up its left.

About midnight our Dragoons heard the rumble of the French guns engaged in the night march. Wellesley got a report of this within half an hour and ordered his troops to take up their assigned positions one hour before dawn. This however was hardly necessary, for Junot, after his night march had halted his troops to rest and cook

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breakfasts at a spot about 4 miles south-east of Vimeiro and in consequence did not put in an appearance until about 9 a.m. When the French columns at length came into sight their appearance puzzled our soldiers not a little, for instead of being in the famous dark blue of France, the men seemed to be clad in dust-coloured clothes which would nowadays be styled "khaki." Later on, it appeared that Junot, solicitous of his men's comfort in marching under the tropical sun of an August in Portugal, had provided them with canvas or linen frocks and that they carried their long blue uniform coats rolled and strapped upon their knapsacks.

Junot, ignoring the British right, under cover of his tirailleurs commenced to deploy opposite their left centre east of the Maceira stream, at the same time pushing his Cavalry and one of Delaborde's Infantry Brigades north-eastward, so as to turn and envelop Wellesley's left. Wellesley was not slow to detect Junot's plan of attack and at once ordered Ferguson's Brigade, which was in reserve behind Vimeiro, and three of the four Brigades he had posted on the heights which formed the right of his position to reinforce his left. Junot saw these movements and reinforced his flank attack with Solignac's Brigade of Loison's Division. As events turned out, this was a false move for it weakened his frontal attack considerably and also left a wide gap, over a mile and a half, between his main and flank attacks.

Junot now delivered his attack upon the hill of Vimeiro. In his first line were two Infantry Brigades, 'Thomières' and Charlot's, $4\frac{1}{4}$ Battalions with 7 guns, whilst in second line were four Battalions of massed Grenadiers with some Cavalry and the reserve Artillery.

Wellesley's dispositions to meet the attack were as follows : Deployed into line and partly hidden by the vineyards and scrub were the 97th Regiment with the 43rd Light Infantry, the 52nd Light Infantry, and 2nd Battalion 9th Regiment formed in column of companies immediately behind in reserve. These were drawn up on the flat summit of the

hill upon open ground with a belt of scrub about one hundred and fifty yards to their front.¹ Fane's Brigade consisting of the 1st Battalion 50th Regiment and the 5th Battalion 60th and 4 companies of the 2nd Battalion 95th as already described, was formed upon Anstruther's left and 12 guns were posted in groups of four on either flank and between the two Brigades.

When 900 yards from the British position, the two French Brigades deployed to their left and advanced to the attack in line of half-battalion columns, each company standing in three ranks. Preceded by a dense line of tirailleurs and supported by the fire of seven guns, the two Brigades advanced, the right one (Thomières') moving almost due west on Vimeiro Hill and the left (Charlot's) moving forward on a line a little west of north—the attack was in fact a concentric one.

“On the night of the 20th I was on an out-picket with a Field Officer and 100 men. Nothing occurred during the night but about seven in the morning the enemy began to appear on some hills in our front and shortly, some of their Cavalry advanced towards the left of our army. I recollected that the French in Egypt feigned an attack on the side which they did not really mean should be attacked and concentrated their grand force on the other flank. It struck me that this would be the case now and I mentioned it to the Field Officer. We had not much time to consider about it before several immense columns made their appearance towards the right and centre to take our guns which were in the first line. The pickets being only a handful of men, by way of a look-out to prevent surprise, were ordered to check the French columns by a running fire as much as possible and to retreat firing. We remained in the wood until several men were killed and the shots flew like hail, when the Field Officer of the pickets ordered us to retreat precipitately as our Artillery dared not fire a shot at the French columns (which were pressing hastily on) till we fell back. We retreated down a vineyard and up another hill before we

¹ Fortescue, vi., 225.

could gain the British lines the whole time exposed to the fire of a battalion of Infantry. In the retreat the Field Officer of the picket received two wounds of which I believe he is since dead. I received a blow, how I cannot conceive, unless a stone was knocked up by the shot against my thigh, which gave me great pain for some days and made me lame. When we reached the lines, the Artillery opened with most wonderful effect. The 97th fired a volley and charged the French on which they retired. I gathered the few of my scattered picket which I could get together and found our Companies with the 50th Regiment in the thickest of it and here there was nothing else (I can describe it no better) than a hail-shower of bullets. The French had brought up their guns certainly with the greatest gallantry under a very heavy fire from us but the gallant resistance they met with from the British on this (I trust for ever memorable day) will teach them that we can beat them on the 21 August as well as on the 21 March.¹ The Regiments which we could see engaged were the 97th, 50th, 43rd, 52nd and 60th, the other part of the Army being on our left at a good distance. We had something else to do than to look for them. I can only say that no men could behave with greater bravery than all those we saw."²

It was now that Fane sent forward nearly the whole of the Riflemen of the 95th and 60th who pushed down to the foot of the hill in skirmishing order. He kept his third Battalion, the 50th, in support formed on Anstruther's left with three companies thrown out to the left. The French attacked and drove in the Riflemen with great determination without a check and reached a hedgerow on the hillside. Here they rallied, and gaining strength advanced again, again driving in the Riflemen and following them up close to the British line whose fire was necessarily masked for a time. Anstruther sent out four companies to cover the retreat of the 95th and hardly had the Riflemen re-formed when Thomières'

¹ Date of the Battle of Alexandria, in 1801.

² Extracts from a letter by Captain Leach written a few days after the battle.

Brigade closed upon Fane's reserve Regiment—the 50th. By good fortune the fire of the three companies of this Regiment detached on his left had caused the French attack to incline towards them and at this moment the Colonel of the 50th wheeled up two companies of his right wing upon Thomières' left flank and without losing a second fired a volley and charged. Taken by fire thus on both flanks the French column was severely shaken and disorganized, the drivers of the three leading guns cut their traces and plunged back through their own infantry. Next minute, three more companies of the 50th formed up and fired a volley and before they could charge, the whole French Brigade broke and rushed down the slope in wild confusion. In this final overthrow, some of the reserve companies of Riflemen bore a hand; these were probably some of the 5th Battalion 60th, since Leach makes no mention of the matter.

The gallant Delaborde who although suffering from wounds received at Roliça, four days earlier, had led this attack of his right Brigade, was no more successful with his left Brigade. For almost simultaneously with Thomières' overthrow, Charlot's Brigade closed upon Anstruther. This Brigadier now had the 97th Regiment deployed in first line with the 43rd Light Infantry in echelon behind its right flank and the 52nd Light Infantry, in echelon in rear of its left flank, with the 2nd Battalion 9th Regiment in reserve, in column of companies. As the French emerged from the small wood immediately in front of Anstruther and only 150 yards distant, the 97th were ordered to advance on them and fire volleys. These shook the French and Anstruther ordered the 52nd to double round by the rear and fall upon their left flank. This attack was as equally decisive as that of the 50th and the French broke their ranks and poured down the hillside. The attack on Vimeiro Hill had thus been defeated at both points, the attackers had suffered very heavy losses and had left all their guns behind and both Generals Delaborde and Charlot were wounded.

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As has been already described, Junot had sent a Brigade and 6 guns to reinforce Brennier's distant outflanking movement and now found himself with only four Infantry Battalions in hand and 4 guns, with which to renew the attack. But Junot was a fine fighter and had not yet learned that he could not treat British Infantry as he and his great master had so often hitherto served Continental troops; in plain words, as Fortescue says, he still despised them. These four Battalions consisted of the massed Grenadiers and were essentially *corps d'élite*. Junot now made his second attack much along the same route that Delaborde had led Thomières' Brigade. Two Battalions under General St. Clair advanced in column of platoons¹ supported by the fire of his four guns which now and again unlimbered and fired on the British position. The Grenadiers pushed on, despite the heavy artillery fire, and soon encountered the bickering fire of the Riflemen of the 95th and 60th, who once again were thrown forward. Then they came under more infantry fire, that of the 52nd and 97th, and after enduring heavy losses and having nearly the whole of the two leading platoons struck down by our fire they broke and rushed headlong down to the shelter of the deep hollow below the Eastern heights.

Whilst this fight was in progress, Junot sent General Kellermann with the two remaining Battalions of Grenadiers to endeavour to turn Fane's left flank and cut into the village of Vimeiro from the north-east. Anstruther at once sent the 43rd Light Infantry down towards the village to hold the cemetery, and thus to take Kellermann in flank, and Acland, who was posted on the spur of the Eastern heights, opened on the French column with his guns and sent four companies of light troops to attack it in flank. These were headed by the two companies of the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Regiment under Capt. A. Cameron,² which had landed on the preceding day, supported by

¹ Probably each platoon was of 16 files, 3 ranks deep (Fortescue).

² Afterwards, Major-General Sir Alexander Cameron, K.C.B.

two Light Companies from the Line Battalions. The Grenadiers, although thus exposed to artillery and rifle fire on their right and musketry fire on their left, pushed on. Now it was that they encountered the 43rd and some desperate fighting followed, amid the enclosures and buildings. Finally the Grenadiers, having lost heavily, retreated. The 43rd Light Infantry had alone lost 40 killed and 79 wounded, the proportion of killed to wounded showing the determined nature of the struggle.

Our Cavalry, the 20th Light Dragoons, under Colonel Taylor, now trotted forward, and wheeling to the left, rode down and sabred the fugitives who were falling back from the unsuccessful attack. Unfortunately, they went too far and were charged by some French squadrons and more than half of them killed or wounded, the Colonel being among the former.

It was now about half-past ten, and so far as concerns the part taken by the two Battalions of the Rifle Regiment, there is nothing more to record, for with Junot's third repulse the action ended in this portion of the field of battle. It is not a little gratifying to record the conspicuous share our Riflemen bore in the successive defeats of our most gallant assailants.

It is of interest to record that on this day a new weapon made its appearance on the battlefield, for Wellesley brought up his howitzers which for the first time in the history of the British Army, fired shrapnel-shell on our foes.

Junot's big outflanking movement concerns us but little, since it was an entirely separate action. It is enough to say that Solignac's Brigade, which advanced in line of Battalion columns covered by a line of skirmishers, upon reaching the crest of the northern spurs of Wellesley's position, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles north-east of Vimeiro, were met by the fire of four British Regiments deployed in line, occupying a far more extended front than did the French. This fire swept away

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the skirmishers and shattered the heads of the columns. Then it was that the British line of 3,200 bayonets advanced ; and the French, hopelessly outnumbered, fled, leaving 3 guns behind.

But, whilst the victorious British soldiers were still in disorder and clustered round the captured guns, Brennier's Brigade, which had been unaccountably delayed, suddenly appeared on the north of the plateau and advancing vigorously, supported by cavalry, for a time recaptured the guns. But the British rallied and drove back the French, recovering the guns and capturing three others. The 71st Highland Light Infantry lost no less than 112 men in this gallant affair. Both Solignac and Brennier were wounded and the latter was taken prisoner. The French were now utterly defeated at every point, and all that was required to make this defeat an overwhelming disaster was a general advance of the victorious British troops. But no orders for such an advance came. Then came an order for them to stand fast !

It is agreed by all who have studied this battle and the military situation in Portugal at the time, that a vigorous forward movement on the part of Wellesley would have driven the French, not into Lisbon, for Wellesley already commanded that route, but into the rugged sierra towards Santarem. In fact, the French were in a bad way, one and all alike of their Regiments and Battalions had been engaged and had suffered heavily : they had lost 13 out of their 23 guns and had endured no less than seven repulses during the day's fighting. In the British force, all ranks were astounded at the non-receipt of orders to pursue the retreating foe. Then the truth gradually became known. Sir Harry Burrard had landed during the morning and had reached the battlefield whilst the struggle was progressing. He, at any rate, had the good feeling not to supersede Wellesley in the course of the action, but once the enemy were defeated, he was absolutely obdurate and forbade any pursuit whatever. "The army had done enough for one day," was his unfortunate decision. Yet Wellesley had at that

moment no less than 9,000 fresh troops with rations in their haversacks and a plentiful supply of reserve ammunition, whilst the French, save for their cavalry, were flying in disordered masses. It was indeed a pitiable ending to a splendid fight.

The British losses in this most successful action were remarkably small. As at Roliça, the actual fighting was done by but a fraction of the force in the field. Three Brigades did not return any casualties at all. The total losses were 4 officers and 131 men killed and 37 officers and 497 men wounded. Two officers and 49 men were missing. The piquets of the 95th and 60th which had been so roughly driven in at the commencement of the action and the weak squadrons of the 20th Light Dragoons, whose gallant charge had proved so disastrous to them, supplied the bulk of the few prisoners taken. Of the Rifle Regiment 3 sergeants and 34 Riflemen were killed, and 4 officers, Lieutenants Henry Manners, D. St. L. Hill, James Johnson and William Cox, and 3 sergeants and 40 Riflemen were wounded.¹ All these belonged to the four 2nd Battalion Companies, who on this memorable day lost nearly one-fourth of their effective strength. No return was made of the casualties in the 1st Battalion Companies, but as there was such heavy fighting around the village of Vimeiro, where they were engaged with the Grenadiers, there were probably a few.

The losses of the French, according to Marshal Foy, who is generally very correct in his estimates, were 1,800, and of these between 300 and 400 were unwounded prisoners.

How severe were the losses inflicted by our Riflemen on the gallant Frenchmen who attacked the hill of Vimeiro with such determination is well told in George Simmons' Journal² by a French Infantry Captain who had been wounded and taken prisoner, and who thus describes his experiences on 21 August 1808 :—

¹ 2nd Battalion Records.

² "A British Rifle Man," 102.

“I met the English. Oh, that morning was one of the most happy of my life ! My men to a man had the same feeling. I was sent out to skirmish against some of these in green—grasshoppers I call them ; you call them Riflemen. They were behind every bush and stone, and soon made sad havoc among my men, killing all the officers of my company, and wounding myself without being able to do them any injury. This drove me to distraction. In a little time the British line advanced. I was knocked down, bayoneted, and should have been put to death upon the spot if an English officer had not saved me.”

The luckless Frenchman, who died of his wounds, in all probability belonged to Charlot's Brigade.

Immediately after the battle of Vimeiro the two Companies of the 1st Battalion were transferred from Acland's Brigade to Fane's Brigade where they joined the four 2nd Battalion Companies.

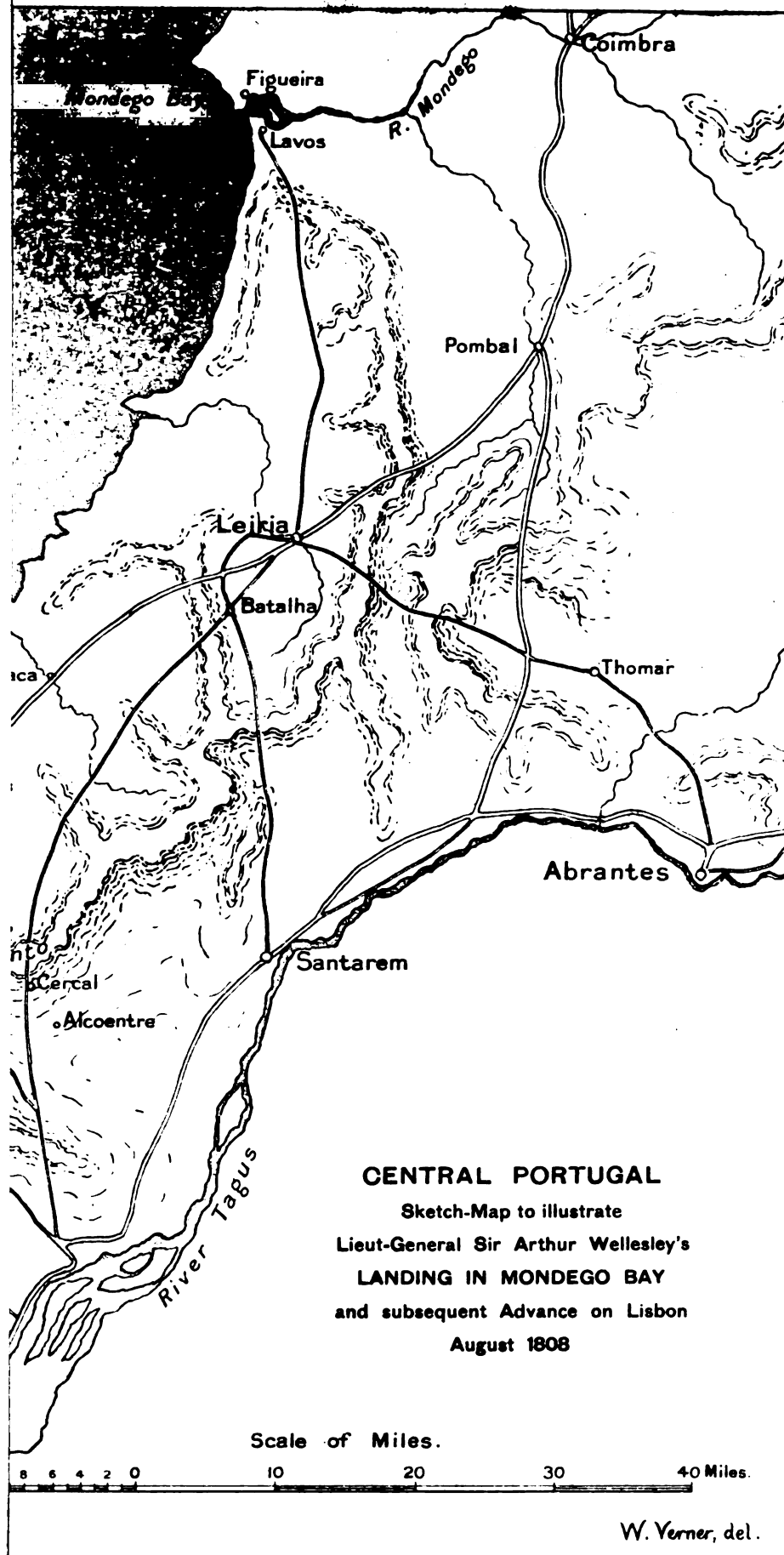
On the morning following the battle, General Sir Hew Dalrymple arrived and superseded Sir Harry Burrard. Unfortunate as the advent of Sir Harry had been for Wellesley's victory, that of Sir Hew was, if possible, even worse. For not only was he more obstinate than Burrard, but he was lacking in military experience, and further, had a bias against Wellesley. Hence it came about that the British army which had been so splendidly successful in two well-fought actions and which, as fruit of Wellesley's strategy, was in a position to reach Lisbon before Junot and which furthermore held the French army at its mercy, was reduced to absolute impotence.

Wellesley's proposed scheme was for Dalrymple to order Sir John Moore's force which had arrived off the coast to land and march on Santarem and cut off Junot's retreat across the Tagus, whilst the main army marched along the coast to Marra and thus turned the position of Torres Vedras. But Sir Hew Dalrymple was obdurate and finally decided to march on Torres Vedras the following morning (23 August). Only a few hours after this decision, Junot, who was in grave alarm

as to his position, sent in General Kellermann with a flag of truce and offered to evacuate Portugal under certain conditions. Since the time had now passed for the occupation of Lisbon without encountering serious opposition Wellesley advised the acceptance of this plan and a forty-eight hours' armistice was agreed upon.

Then followed a series of mistakes and complications. Dalrymple agreed that the French should not be treated as prisoners of war but should be taken back to France in British ships. This was done without reference to the Portuguese Junta at Oporto and caused much friction. Then Junot tried to include the Russian Fleet which lay in the Tagus in the Convention, but here the British Admiral, Sir Charles Cotton, had a word to say and met the proposal with flat refusal. Finally, after a week's wrangling, an agreement known as "The Convention of Cintra" was signed. Under the terms of this the French were to depart for France in British vessels, with their arms, artillery, baggage and "private property." This they eventually did, taking with them an enormous amount of plunder in the shape of gold, specie and valuable works of art from the various Libraries and Museums under the convenient and all-embracing title of "Military equipment"! Small wonder is it that Napoleon's warriors earned for themselves throughout Europe the pseudonym of "an army of brigands!"

On 22 August Sir John Moore's force began to disembark in Mondego Bay, but was re-embarked for no intelligent reason and eventually landed with great difficulty in Maceira Bay between the 25th and 30th of the month. With Moore's force were the three Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Regiment, which, it will be recalled had accompanied him in his fruitless expedition to Sweden in April and the following months. These disembarked on 28 August and joined Fane's Brigade who now had five companies of the 1st Battalion and four companies of the 2nd Battalion under him. The strength



Battle of Vimeiro and Convention of Cintra 169

of the five Companies of the 1st Battalion was over 400 men. The 1st Battalion of the 52nd which had formed part of the Gottenburg army arrived at the same time.

Whilst the negotiations which culminated in the Convention of Cintra were progressing, the advance on Lisbon proceeded in a leisurely manner. On 29 August, the outposts of the army which was then encamped near Torres Vedras were taken up by three Companies of the 1st Battalion 95th, the 1st Battalion 52nd and the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the King's German Light Infantry under Major-General Hon. Edward Paget. On 2 September they were in front of Cintra. On the same day the forts on the Tagus were occupied by British troops. The Russian Admiral thereupon was compelled to surrender his squadron, the arrangement being that the crews were to be sent to Russia and the ships to be retained by England until six months after peace was concluded. The British Army marched into Lisbon on 9 September. On the 11th, Paget's "Advanced Corps" moved to the heights above Belem, and were encamped there. The four Companies of the 2nd Battalion with Fane's Brigade were advanced to near Torres Vedras on 23 August and halted until the 31st when they marched to Sobral. On 2 September they advanced to Bucellas where they halted for over a week and on the 10th they bivouacked in the suburbs of Lisbon on a large public pleasure-ground called the Campo Grande.¹

Then followed the occupation of Lisbon by the combined British forces and a period of delay and hesitation, complicated by the distracted councils and demands of the nebulous Portuguese Government and the difficulties of arriving at any agreement with the Spanish authorities.

Meanwhile, the news of the Convention of Cintra had been received in England with the greatest indignation. First Sir Hew

¹ M.S. Journal, J. Cox.

was recalled and Sir Harry left in command. But in October Sir Harry was likewise recalled and the command devolved upon Sir John Moore.

Sir Arthur Wellesley returned home and on his arrival in England learned to his wrath that his conduct in connection with the signing of the Convention was to be investigated and for a time he was attacked by the English press, notably by the *Times*.

A Court of Enquiry was assembled in London which by a majority approved of both armistice and Convention. But public opinion ran high and in the end Sir Hew Dalrymple was rebuked and removed from the Governorship of Gibraltar. It was in the days when cock-fighting was among the most popular of our national pastimes, and the feelings of the populace with reference to the various degrees of responsibility of the three British Commanders who were involved in both armistice and Convention are well recorded in the old distich which was sung throughout England at this time :—

Sir Arthur and Sir Harry, Sir Harry and Sir Hew

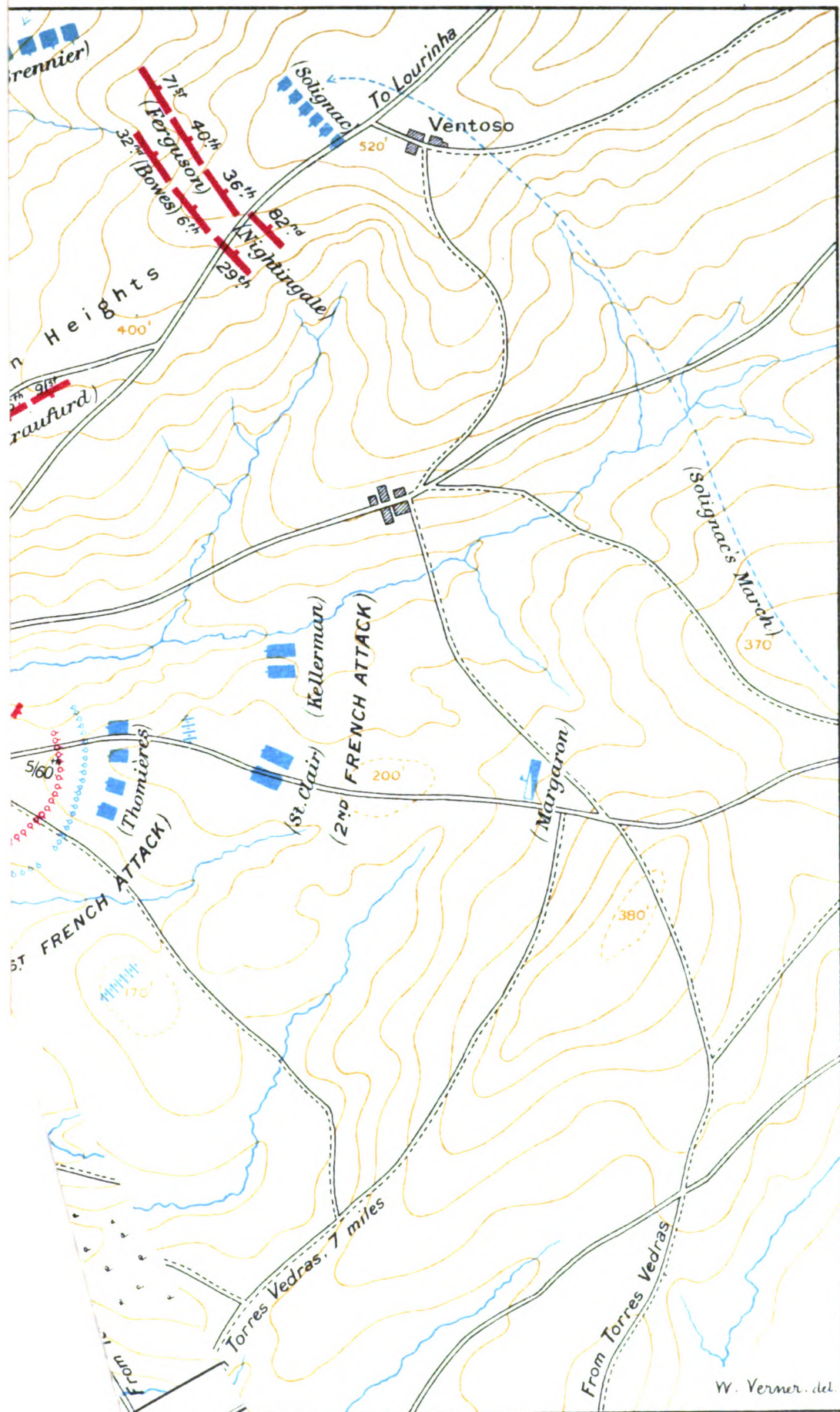
Sir Arthur was { a valiant knight ¹
a fighting cock :

But for the other two :

Sing ! Doodle, Doodle, Doodle, and Cock-a-Doodle Do !¹

So it came about that Sir Arthur Wellesley, although violently attacked in certain quarters, emerged from the ordeal, with the character of being a soldier of resource and daring and within four months was once again in command of an Army in the Peninsula.

Both versions seem to have been equally popular.



2000 Yards.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CAMPAIGN OF CORUÑA, 1808.

LISBON TO BENAVENTE.

The Spanish plan of campaign—The task of Sir John Moore—The strategy of the British Cabinet—Sir John Baird ordered to Coruña with 12,000 men—The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Rifles reinforced from home—Moore's difficulties as to selection of routes—His order of march on Salamanca—Baird arrives at Coruña—Absence of transport and lack of Cavalry—Reaches Astorga—Receives news of Blake's defeat—Movements of Napoleon—He advances on Burgos—and occupies Madrid—General disposition of British Forces on 23 November—Moore hears of Blake's and Castaños' defeat and decides to fall back on Portugal—Hope joins Moore with the Artillery—Pause in Napoleon's operations—His vast plans—Moore decides upon his daring raid on Napoleon's communications—Hears of fall of Madrid and of Napoleon's enormous numbers—His orders for the advance—The advance to the Douro—He learns of Soult's isolation and decides to attack him—Joins Baird at Mayorga—Strength of Moore's army—His final arrangement of Divisions and Brigades—Confidence and discipline of the force at this time—Lieutenant Cox's notes on advance to Sahagun—Napoleon at Madrid—His persistent belief in Moore's retreat on Lisbon—Receives news of Moore's march from deserters—Suspends his advance and orders general movement to overwhelm Moore—Moore hears of Napoleon's approach—"The Race for Benavente"—Lord Paget's Cavalry and the two Light Brigades form the Rear Guard—Craufurd with the 2nd Battalion holds the bridge at Castro Gonzalo—and destroys it—The fight at Benavente—Napoleon baffled.

THE Spanish Military Authorities after much disputation among themselves at last decided upon a plan of campaign. This, See Map X,
p. 198. in outline, was based on the idea of having four separate Armies to oppose the French advance. On the right, in Catalonia, one of these was to operate against the French eastern line of invasion

from Perpignan ; another, near Zaragoza, was to threaten the left of the French western line of invasion from Bayonne. A third, known as the Army of the Centre, was under Castaños on the Ebro near Tudela, whilst a fourth under Blake in the Asturias was to threaten the French on their extreme right. The British forces were to advance on Blake's right. Such was the plan of campaign which Napier describes as one violating every military principle. The one good thing about it was that it showed that the Spaniards were evidently in earnest, and at last realized the importance of having a British army in their midst.

When on 6 October 1808, Sir John Moore arrived at Lisbon and succeeded to the chief command, he found little or nothing had been done to further this plan of campaign. The condition, nay the very existence, of the roads leading from Lisbon to the Portuguese frontier and onward to Madrid were alike unknown to the British Staff, and on these points as well as on many other vital matters of the first military importance neither Portuguese nor Spanish authorities were able to give any safe information. No regular transport existed, save upon the most meagre scale, and the difficulties in the first instance of creating such a service and subsequently of controlling and keeping together the hordes of drivers and muleteers which had to serve as a makeshift for a regular train were simply appalling. Quartermaster Surtees, who had to deal with the Regimental transport of the Rifles, has left a graphic account of these difficulties.¹

The general British plan of campaign was for Moore to push forward to the Upper Ebro where he was assured he would find Castaños' force on his right and Blake's on his left. General Sir David Baird was to be sent from England to Coruña with large reinforcements amounting to 12,000 men, and including among them a Brigade of Guards and three Regiments of Cavalry, an arm of which Moore was lamentably deficient.

¹ "Twenty-five Years in the Rifle Brigade," 81-82.

We will now turn to the movements of the Rifle Regiment. We left the companies of the 1st and 2nd Battalions in camp near Lisbon in September. On the 25th the five 1st Battalion Companies were moved across the Tagus and cantoned in the Alemtejo. Some days before this on 13 September, the four 2nd Battalion Companies had been "placed under canvas at the entrance to Lisbon." Thence, they had opportunities of visiting the Capital and seeing something of their recent opponents. Lieutenant William Cox thus summarizes his impressions of Lisbon :—

"On 13 September I entered Lisbon for the first time. The French Army was still in the Square . . . they appeared much annoyed at their recent discomfiture. We enjoyed ourselves much in this town, there was an excellent Opera here and we had constant balls and entertainments."¹

It is satisfactory to learn that "the best feeling existed between our men and their late opponents, it being a common sight to see the Riflemen walking about the streets of Lisbon with the French soldiers, and drinking with them in the wine-shops."²

Turning now to the Riflemen still in England, the remaining five Companies of the 1st Battalion under Major Norman McLeod which had remained at Hythe since their return from the Expedition to Denmark and four of the six remaining Companies of the 2nd Battalion under Colonel Hamlet Wade which had alike been at Hythe, marched to Harwich and embarked. After a short detention at Falmouth, they sailed for Spain and disembarked at Coruña on 26 October. Here they were formed together as the advance guard of Baird's Force. It will thus be seen that at the opening of the Coruña campaign no less than eighteen out of the twenty companies of Riflemen at this time forming the 95th were in Spain.

Sir John Moore's difficulties were great. Owing to the impassable

¹ M.S. Journal, W. Cox 35.

² Cope, 30.

nature of some of the so-called roads he was compelled to send his artillery by a widely divergent route, whilst his infantry moved along three others.¹

Beresford, with two Brigades of Infantry, advanced on the extreme left or northern flank. With one of his Brigades (Fane's) were the four Companies of the 2nd Battalion of the Rifles which had fought at Roliça and Vimeiro, and with the others were the 2nd Battalions of the 43rd and 52nd Light Infantry. On 15 October Beresford was at Sacavem, and on the following day he crossed the Tagus by a floating bridge and marched via Villafranca, Leiria, Coimbra, Pombal and Celerico to Pinhel arriving there on 10 November. Lieutenant Cox notes on this day that "the army being about to enter Spain has mounted the red cockade of that nation." On 11 November Beresford was at Almeida and on the 17th he entered Salamanca.

The centre column under Bentinck, composed of two and a half Brigades of Infantry and six light guns, marched by Abrantes on Guarda.

On the extreme right or southern flank marched Lord Paget with Alten's and Anstruther's Brigades, the latter composed of the 20th Regiment, 1st Battalion 52nd Light Infantry, and five Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Regiment. He left Lisbon on 27th October and moved on Elvas, thence he turned northward to Alcantara on the Tagus and proceeded via El Bodon to Ciudad Rodrigo arriving at Salamanca on 13 November.

Sir John Hope with the Artillery (24 guns), escorted by Moore's two Cavalry Regiments, the 18th Hussars and the 3rd Hussars of the K.G.L. and four Infantry Battalions, marched by the main Madrid road to Elvas, Badajoz and Almaraz and thence eastward and northward by the Escorial.

¹ For the arrangement of his marches and the selection of his routes he was severely blamed at the time, and similar attacks on his military capacity have of late years been renewed. With the discovery and publication of his Diary by the late Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, in 1904, a complete vindication of Moore's military reputation was put on record for all time.

Moore himself accompanied the centre column crossing the Spanish Frontier on 12 November and arriving at Salamanca on 13 November. The march of his three infantry columns was thus well timed, but the Artillery under Hope did not join him until three weeks later, on 4 December.

Baird meanwhile had arrived at Coruña on 13 October but was unable to land until the 26th owing to objections from our allies, the Spanish Junta ! The disembarkation of his Infantry was not completed until 4 November. After overcoming stupendous difficulties in the organization of his transport and in obtaining supplies, he was compelled to move his men forward in successive bodies of 2,000 in order to subsist them. So it came about that at one period his whole force was echeloned all along the route from Coruña to Astorga a distance of 140 miles. The British Cabinet, true to its traditions of "how not to do it," both then and since, had further elected to send out his three Cavalry Regiments *last* of all, apparently for no other reason than that their functions in war ordained that they should be the first to advance ; and when Baird reached Astorga on 22 November he had with him three Brigades of Infantry and some Artillery, but not a single cavalry soldier to cover his advance ! Here he received the unpleasant news that the Spanish armies which he had been assured were covering his advance, an advance perforce conducted in such a disconnected manner, had been defeated and dispersed on 10 and 11 November and that his further advance to join Moore at Salamanca was threatened by two French Corps under Soult and Le Febvre !

We must now turn to the movements of Napoleon and his armies in the Peninsula. He left Bayonne on 4 November, apparently unaware of Sir John's Moore's advance from Portugal. On 6 November he arrived at Vitoria and after four days delay advanced and, brushing aside the paltry defence offered by the Spaniards, under Belvedere at Gamonal north of Burgos on 10 November, occupied that city and

promptly sacked it. At Burgos he remained for ten days whilst his lieutenants developed his general scheme for driving Blake into the Bay of Biscay and Castaños into the Pyrenees. On 11 November Soult routed Blake's forces and drove him into the Galician Mountains; on 23rd Lannes routed Castaños at Tudela on the Ebro. All being now clear, Napoleon pushed on from Burgos and crossing the Somosierra on 30 November arrived before Madrid on 3 December. The Spaniards offered a nominal resistance and on the following day, 4 December, he entered the capital. A few days later, several of the Madrid authorities swore allegiance to King Joseph and took service under him. Such was the terror inspired by Napoleon's presence.

The positions of the widely separated British Forces on 23 November were then as follows:—

At Salamanca : Sir John Moore, with six Infantry Brigades and one Light Battery Artillery.

At Astorga : Sir David Baird, with four Infantry Brigades and three Batteries.

At the Escorial : Sir John Hope, with two Cavalry Regiments, four Infantry Battalions and six Batteries Artillery.

Lugo to Astorga : Lord Paget, with three Regiments of Cavalry.

On 23 November Moore received the disquieting information of the rout of Blake's forces and realized that in place of being able to carry out his plan for concentrating his scattered columns under cover of the Spanish armies, he was within 50 to 80 miles of the various sections of Napoleon's immense army numbering some 200,000 men. A few days later, on 28 November, came the news of Castaños' defeat and for a brief space of time Moore's one idea, naturally enough, was to abandon the whole scheme and devote all his energies to save his scattered forces from being overwhelmed and annihilated. That same night, he drafted orders for a general retreat on Portugal, sending word to Hope to join him by Peñeranda and Alba de Tormes and writing

to Baird to return to Coruña, re-embark and come round to Lisbon. These orders were however modified but not before Baird had received his and acted on them. Hope by means of forced marches succeeded in joining Moore on 4 December at Salamanca. Most fortunately Napoleon had no knowledge of Hope's movements and so ordered scouting to be carried out to the south. Had he reconnoitred westward, he would have discovered Hope's column. Moore, for the first time in the campaign, found himself with a force of the three arms, some 20,000 strong. Meanwhile Baird, leaving his Cavalry with the Light Brigade at Astorga so as to cover his retreat had retired upon Villafranca, about 50 miles on the road to Coruña. On 1 December Moore pushed forward some regiments to cover Salamanca. Among these were "the Rifles of course, we occupied the village of Villaris and barricaded the streets against Cavalry," so writes Lieutenant Cox.

From 4 to 22 December Napoleon remained at Madrid perfecting his plans for a winter campaign in which he was determined to subdue Spain for all time. His main objective, of course, was the small British Army which he imagined to be in full retreat on Lisbon. Meanwhile, Moore, much to his surprise, had received no reports as to the presence of French troops anywhere near him, but heard that Napoleon was massing his forces at Madrid.

It was now that Moore, on 5 December, in face of the most overwhelming difficulties and in spite of the most depressing news of the utter collapse of the Spanish armies, determined upon the truly brilliant stroke with which his name will be connected for all time. Reckoning that Napoleon was much occupied with his great plans to capture Madrid, to advance upon Portugal and seize Lisbon and to push southward and subjugate Andalusia, he determined to make a raid on Valladolid or even on Burgos, and thus to threaten Napoleon's arterial line of communications with France. In coming to this daring decision, he knew full well that the instant Napoleon got tidings of his temerity

he would turn upon him and endeavour to crush him with all his forces. For this he was prepared and announced in his letters at the time that he was well aware that his only chance of escape in such an emergency would be to make an immediate run for it. What he did *not* know was that Madrid had surrendered ignominiously to Napoleon only the day before he had decided on his advance on Valladolid, and secondly, that Napoleon in place of having at his disposal some 110,000 men, had over double that number, namely, 250,000, and so outnumbered him by 10 to 1 !

Moore now set about his hazardous task. On 6 December he ordered Baird to send his Brigade of Hussars (the 7th, 10th and 15th), under Lord Paget, from Astorga to Benavente in the plains of Leon. He sent his heavy baggage, reserve ammunition and sick back to Portugal under escort of the 5th Battalion 60th. He also gathered up some corps coming up from Lisbon. Just as his preparations were complete, he heard that Madrid was in Napoleon's hands, but this he had anticipated and so was not to be deterred from his daring venture. On 11 December he began his march in two columns covered by his cavalry and advanced on Toro and Tordesillas on the Douro. On 13 December an intercepted despatch from Berthier to Soult, the bearer whereof had been murdered by the Spanish peasantry, gave Moore full information of Napoleon's plans. From this despatch Moore learnt that Soult was isolated near Sahagun, and he instantly decided to fall upon him, and on the 15th turned northward. On the 20th he joined Baird at Mayorga. At last the British Army in Spain was united. The total strength was just 25,000 men ; of these 2,450 were Cavalry, 1,287 Artillery with 66 guns.¹

Moore now made an entirely fresh arrangement of his forces which he divided into four Divisions and two independent Light Brigades. One of these divisions styled "The Reserve Division" was under Major-

¹ Oman, i., 528.

General Hon. Edward Paget, and included, among other corps, the 1st Battalion 52nd Light Infantry and the 1st Battalion of the 95th Rifle Regiment, now 10 Companies strong and numbering 700 all ranks. The 1st Light Brigade under Brigadier-General Robert Craufurd consisted of the 1st Battalion 43rd Light Infantry, the 2nd Battalion 52nd Light Infantry and the 2nd Battalion of the 95th Rifle Regiment, now eight companies strong and numbering 750 all ranks. The 2nd Battalion of the 43rd was in Beresford's Brigade of the 3rd Division. It is interesting to note that all three of these famous Regiments, 43rd, 52nd and 95th, thus had each one of them two Battalions engaged in Moore's famous march.

Fortescue calls attention to the fact that at this period, in spite of bitter weather and snow-covered roads, Sir John Moore's soldiers were in good health and order and their confidence in themselves was if anything rather too great. He adds that Sir Arthur Wellesley fully shared the feeling that our men were superior to the French in every way, and that General Charles Stewart believed that Moore's men could beat twice their number of French. No doubt the successes of Roliça and Vimeiro as well as that at Maida were at the basis of this belief. Fortescue states that our men were greater in stature and suggests that they probably were aware that the British tactics were better than those of their enemy. This feeling of conscious superiority is worthy of more than passing notice, for it reacted subsequently in a most unfortunate manner. For when, for the most convincing strategical reasons, Moore was compelled to retreat without offering battle, a grave spirit of discontent arose among the great mass of the officers and men who, convinced of their fighting superiority over their gallant foes, bitterly resented being ordered to retreat before them time after time, without offering battle.

Of Moore's advance from Salamanca to the Douro Lieutenant Cox has left the following notes :—

" 11 December, marched 30 miles to Zamora.

" 13 December, marched up the Douro, 20 miles to Toro.

" 14th halted, joined by the Hussar Brigade. Last night, the 18th Hussars and 3rd Hussars, K.G.L., had the honour of opening the campaign. Brigadier-General Stewart, at the head of 100 of the 18th Hussars having surprised a Cavalry Detachment at Rueda, making 27 prisoners, and a French patrol of 15 Cavalry were made prisoners by the 18th close to our post last night, the officer only having escaped.

" 15th, affair of Cavalry near Valladolid, French Light Horse and 50 Dragoons taken.

" 19th, 20 miles to Villa Mayor.

" 20th, 15 miles to Villalon.

" 21st, 18 miles to Villada.

" These marches were very harassing owing to the severe cold with heavy snow on these extensive plains. A very brilliant Cavalry action took place in front of Sahagun early this morning between the 10th and 15th Hussars under Lord Paget ; the enemy had scarcely time to form outside the town when they were charged and overthrown with a loss of 2 Colonels, 10 officers and 150 prisoners, besides those sabred.

" 22nd, marched to Sahagun where we hoped to halt for the night, but not so, being ordered on 4 or 5 miles in front to the monastery of Trianis where we were joined by the rest of the Battalion that came out with Sir David Baird. Our march to-day was 17 miles through snow. Our Brigade now consisted of the 1st Battn. 43rd L.I., 2nd Battn. 52nd L.I. and 2nd Battn. 95th Rifle Regiment commanded by Brig. R. Craufurd."

Throughout the first half of December Napoleon continued in his belief that Moore was falling back westward on Lisbon, whilst, as we have seen, he was really pressing northward with all speed to endeavour to destroy Soult's isolated corps. On 19 December Napoleon held a Grand Review at Madrid, and a few hours later he received positive information from three deserters from the 5th Battalion of the 60th that the British, far from retreating on Lisbon, had

actually taken the offensive and were marching north-east.¹ That same night he ordered a strong force to march and attack Moore's rear and sent orders to Soult to co-operate. Within the next forty-eight hours he had sent orders to all his lieutenants to stop their advance and to turn and assist him in overwhelming the presumptuous Englishman.

On 23rd Moore was at Sahagun and there received the long-expected news that Napoleon had become aware of his march and had left Madrid and was hastening at the head of some 80,000 men to destroy his tiny force. Within three hours of receiving this report, Moore had arranged for his retreat on Coruña. And now came the famous "race for Benavente," the strategic point on Moore's line of retreat which, if seized by the French, would sever him from his ships at Coruña. Napoleon urged his Cavalry of the Guard over the snowy passes of the Guadarrama in a furious hurricane; Lapisse's Infantry Division followed. They reached Medina del Campo on 23rd.

On 24 December Moore commenced his retreat from Sahagun, leaving there the Reserve Division and the two Light Brigades to cover his retreat, whilst in order to deceive Soult, who was at Saldaña and Carrion, Paget's Cavalry pushed forward towards the River Carrion. Lieutenant Cox's entries at this period are significant.

"24th, advanced on Soult, news of Napoleon's advance. Retreat of the British Army—not a very cheering prospect—a winter's retreat through mountains covered with snow lies before us, but we will do our duty come what will.

"25 December. Our Brigade now on rear guard retired 24 miles on Mayorga and 28 miles more next day to the village of S. Miguel. During the last night Lord Paget fell back with the Cavalry from Sahagun and fell in with a body of French Cavalry near Mayorga which he attacked with the 10th Hussars, taking 100 prisoners, and the 7th Hussars also retook some baggage which had fallen into their hands."

¹ Fortescue, vi., 342-343.

The cold weather now abated and was succeeded by a thaw and heavy rains which made marching very difficult. On the 25th Napoleon reached Tordesillas. By the 27th all Moore's men were west of the Esla River, save only Paget's 2,400 horsemen, who made such a splendid resistance to the French Cavalry that Napoleon estimated them at over double their actual strength. On the 28th Craufurd held the bridge on the Esla at Castro Gonzalo whilst Paget's Regiments withdrew across it. A French Cavalry patrol approached a 43rd piquet, riding in sharply on a double sentry, one of whom was cut down whilst the other escaped after bayoneting one of their horses.¹ Amid a storm of rain and in presence of Napoleon's Cavalry under Colbert and Lefebre-Desnoëttes Craufurd set his troops to work to destroy the massive masonry bridge. At nightfall they were attacked but easily drove back the dismounted Cavalry. Cox writes of this :—

“On the morning of the 28th, the 18th Hussars had an affair with the French Cavalry which they routed and took an officer and some men. Three Companies 95th Rifles and two Companies 43rd took post on the heights in front of the Bridge of Benavente this afternoon so as to protect the Engineers mining it. We burnt a Posthouse and some buildings here to prevent the enemy obtaining wood for a temporary bridge. After dark a French patrol approached our post but rode off again upon being fired upon, discharging their carabines in return. At midnight we crossed the half-destroyed bridge and an arch having been blown up soon after, we joined the Reserve of the Army at Benavente—we lay in the streets until daybreak.”

By the destruction of the bridge across the Esla, the French hosts were left on the wrong side of the river. The next day, the 29th, Lefebre-Desnoëttes, with some Chasseurs of the Guard and other light horse forded the Esla and drove in the British piquets to Benavente. Then followed the famous Cavalry action in which the

¹ Rifleman Harris' "Recollections," 171.

10th, 15th and 18th Hussars so distinguished themselves. The following is Lieut. Cox's description of this brilliant affair which resulted in Benavente being added as a "Battle Honour" for our Cavalry :—

"Dec. 29. As day dawned, the Reserve filed out of the town followed by our Brigade. As we cleared it, a body of the French Imperial Cavalry of the Guard crossed a ford of the Esla near the bridge. Our Cavalry piquets in observance on the river immediately united under Col. Otway and disputed the ground while slowly retiring. Brig.-General Stuart soon arrived placing himself at the head of the piquets while Lord Paget brought up the 10th Hussars in support ; a dash was now made on the enemy who could not escape from the fleetness of English horses and were soon overtaken when 60 of them were cut down and considerably more taken prisoners, among them was Gen. Le Febre. We lost about 40 in the business. The French on reaching the opposite bank of the river formed up but some guns of our Horse Artillery arriving soon made them scamper off again. Bunoparte (*sic*) witnessed the whole affair."

Owing to the very thorough manner in which, under Craufurd's protection, the Engineers had destroyed the bridge across the Esla (for they had blown up the central pier as well as the crowns of the arches), two days elapsed before the French Infantry and Artillery could cross the river. Napoleon's tremendous effort to cut off and utterly to destroy the presumptuous Moore and his army had failed !

CHAPTER XV.

THE RETREAT OF CORUÑA, 1808—09.

BENAVENTE TO CORUÑA.

Benavente to Astorga—Moore decides not to fight and falls back on Villafranca—Discontent of the Army in consequence—Grave irregularities on the march—Napoleon enters Astorga—Too late!—He hands over command to Soult and turns back—His last personal experience of British troops until Waterloo—Craufurd with his Light Brigade and the K.G.L. ordered to retire by the parallel road to Vigo—Lieutenant Cox's account of this retreat—Edward Paget replaces Craufurd in command of Moore's Rear-guard—The 1st Battalion take up the Rear Guard duties—Scenes of disorder at Bembridge and Villafranca—Paget's stern discipline—The Fight at Cacabelos—The French Dragoons get among the Riflemen—Arrival of Merle's Division—Colbert's furious Cavalry attack—He is slain by Rifleman Thomas Plunket—Skirmishes between Villafranca and Las Herreras—Moore decides upon Coruña for re-embarkation—The mountainous country between Villafranca and Lugo—"Fifty miles of deep snow"—Adam Neale's description—Sir R. K. Porter's sketches—Sufferings of the British—and of the pursuing French—Abandonment of British Treasure-chest—The Rifles' firm stand at the Bridge of Constantin—Moore's commendation—Moore halts at Lugo—Soult arrives but waits for reinforcements—Moore retires—"A defeat ruin, a victory useless"—Disastrous night-march—Sharp skirmishes at Betanzos—Napier's eulogy of Paget's Reserve—Moore reaches Coruña—The Rifles take up the outposts—Moore occupies the heights south of Coruña—The Cavalry, guns and sick are embarked.

ON 29 December the Reserve under Major-General Hon. Edward Paget, after witnessing the overthrow of the French Cavalry by our gallant Hussars, continued the retreat on Astorga. That day they covered over 25 miles to La Baneza. Of this day's march Lieutenant Cox writes :—

“We had a most fatiguing march of about 30 miles to La Baneza—the worst I have hitherto experienced—no provisions having been issued to us at the bridge for two days, some biscuit only was obtained from carts that were too late to pass over it. No change to be had from the baggage which was far away, my last pair of shoes torn in pieces and for the first time in my life compelled to walk barefooted for the last 10 miles over a flinty road, up on duty all the previous night—all combined to stamp misery on the recollection of them. On arriving at La Baneza we were put into a cold Convent, the town being crowded with the Reserve and fatigue parties busily employed in throwing ammunition into the water which could not be forwarded. At daybreak the Bugles sounded to march. How was I to do this with sore feet? A pair of monk’s shoes was obtained without leave from a dusty corner which enabled me to get along. ‘Necessity has no law.’

“Dec. 30. Retired 15 m. to Astorga . . . full of Spanish troops—immense destruction of stores here.”

On 30th the whole of Moore’s force was united at Astorga “the Gate of the Galician Mountains.” Here also were the miserable remains of Romana’s army some 10,000 strong, but a demoralized mob after their recent severe defeat near Leon.

Moore, for reasons which need not be recapitulated here but which will appeal to the intelligence of every educated soldier, decided not to stand and offer battle to Soult’s and Napoleon’s approaching armies and ordered a retreat on Villafranca, some 35 miles westward.¹ Moore’s own reason for not fighting was that “a battle was the game of Bonaparte but not of the British.”

And now it was that the British soldiers, who had hitherto evinced such excellent discipline under most adverse conditions, seem to have got out of hand entirely. In some regiments all discipline was at an

¹ Moore’s reasons will be found well set forth in Fortescue, vol. vi., 358-359, and *note*. Mr. Oman and others have blamed Moore for thus retreating, but such criticisms when investigated from the point of supplies and transport alone will be found to be futile.

end. The army as a whole was exasperated at having to retreat before an enemy they despised, and the confusion at Astorga caused by the presence of Romana's rabble host prevented any orderly issue of clothing and shoes being made. All was chaos; owing to want of transport, it was necessary to destroy many stores and this was badly carried out. The bad characters of course were in their element and houses were looted and drink obtained, with deplorable results. Nor were the men alone to blame; it is a regrettable fact that some of the officers of certain corps by their ignorant talk encouraged the men to think that they had been ordered to retreat before the French without reason.

On 1 January 1809 the French entered Astorga. The British rear-guard had left it only the day before and some of our gallant cavalry only a few hours before Napoleon himself arrived. His great attempt had failed and he knew it. It was at this critical moment that he received serious news as to Austria's hostile attitude and troubles in Paris. So it was that he decided to return to Paris and issued orders for Soult with 25,000 foot and 4,000 horse to pursue Moore, and directed Ney, with 16,000 more men to support him if necessary.

On 3 January Napoleon returned to Benavente on his way back to France. It was fated to be his last personal experience of British troops until the Waterloo campaign, six years and a half later. Riflemen will derive satisfaction from the fact that the last shots from Moore's rear-guard were fired by the 95th, at the baffled Emperor's advance guard. So also the first shots from the British force at Quatre Bras on 16 June 1815, were from the same indefatigable soldiers.¹

Two roads lead from Astorga to the Atlantic coast. When Moore left Astorga, he directed his main force to march by the northern road on Manzanal towards Coruña and he detached his two Light

¹ A considerable number of Officers and men of the Rifle Regiment were present on both these historic occasions.

Brigades, Craufurd's and Alten's, by the southern road, on Vigo. Craufurd was to seize the bridge over the Minho at Orense so as to secure it in the event of Moore deciding to fall back on Vigo instead of on Coruña, and to guard against any attempt of the French to advance by Orense and Santiago on Coruña. The correctness of this strategical disposition will be apparent to all who study the problem of the re-embarkation as it presented itself to Moore. Baird, it may be remarked was anxious to go to Vigo. As events turned out, the French did not follow up Craufurd's line of retreat and, in spite of great privations and terrible weather, he reached Vigo with but small loss.¹

The miseries and hardships of the retreat have been graphically described by Rifleman Harris. It was due to Craufurd's iron discipline that he was able to carry the affair through as he did, and it is gratifying to chronicle that on his arrival at Vigo on 12 January "the soldiers who had cursed him on the march, blessed the unyielding firmness of the man who had carried them safely through those terrible days of fatigue and exposure."²

With Craufurd were the 1st Battalion 43rd Light Infantry, 2nd Battalion 52nd Light Infantry and the 2nd Battalion of the 95th Rifle Regiment, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Hamlet Wade, also Alten's Light Brigade.

Before describing the further retreat upon Coruña, I will give the following extracts from Lieutenant Cox's diary respecting the march of Craufurd's Brigade on Vigo :—

¹ It is a pity that Mr. Oman should have freely criticized and condemned Moore for this diversion of the Light Brigades on Vigo. The mischief of such criticism unfortunately does not stop with the writer's opinions, for more recent writers, such as the French historian, Commandant Balagny, have naturally enough adopted Mr. Oman's views and amplified them. The responsibility of an English writer of the military history of his own country seems to have weighed but lightly on Mr. Oman, for one can hardly blame a Frenchman for accepting his statements.

² Fortescue, vi., 363.

"1808 Dec. 31 we commenced the ascent of the Galician Mountains and after a severe march reached Fuencebadon.

"1809 1 Jan. marched 20 m. to Ponferrada. . . here it was decided that the main body of the army should retire by Lugo on Corunna and that our Bde. with the 2 Light Bns. K.G.L. should fall back by the Vigo road to secure that Port and form a flanking column.

"On 4 Jan. a detachment of 300 of the freshest men were sent on by forced marches to secure passage of River Minho by the bridge at Orense.

"8 Jan., six days of incessant marching through snowy mountains brought the two Brigades to the town of Orense, having traversed from Ponferrada upwards of 100 miles, through almost impassable roads (without baggage, which no doubt took the road of the main column), and frequently benighted far short of our destination, which was sure to be wretched villages half buried in snow and frequently having to feel with poles for doors of the houses and fortunate were they who found any provisions in them for too often the inmates absconded, after concealing all eatables when they found the men coming. They also drove away their oxen, which caused great difficulty in getting bullocks for the sick carts.

"12 Jan., arrived at Vigo. On topping the hills that opened to us the view of this fine Bay, nothing could exceed the joy that ran through our ranks. The fleet of transports was clearing the Bay as we gained the summit of the last ridge of hills going round to Corunna under convoy of the Victory 110 guns, Barfleur 98 and a frigate, the Endymion I believe, the Alfred 74 remaining to convoy us."

That Craufurd was very severe in his dealings with those under him during this portion of the retreat is unquestionable, but in all probability he saved scores of lives by his draconic treatment of a few of the principal offenders among those who straggled in search of food or otherwise disobeyed orders. Harris describes the Riflemen as being "pallid, way-worn, their feet bleeding and their faces overgrown with beards of many days' growth." He adds "The Rifles liked him but they also feared him, for he could be terrible when

insubordination showed itself in the ranks. ‘You think because you are Riflemen you may do as you think proper’ said he one day to a miserable and savage-looking crew around him but I’ll teach you the difference before I have done with you.’ . . . The Rifles being always at his heels he seemed to think them his familiars. . . . If he stopped his horse and halted to deliver one of his stern reprimands, you would see half-a-dozen lean, unshaven, shoeless and savage Riflemen, standing for the moment leaning upon their weapons, and scowling up in his face as he scolded ; and when he dashed the spurs into his reeking horse, they would throw up their rifles upon their shoulders, and hobble after him again. He was sometimes to be seen in the front, then in the rear, and then you would fall in with him again in the midst, dismounted and marching on foot, that the men might see he took an equal share in the toils which they were enduring.”

The duty of covering the retreat of the rear-guard of Moore’s Army, which had hitherto rested in Craufurd’s hands, now fell upon Edward Paget’s Reserve Division, composed of the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Regiment under Lieut.-Colonel Sidney Beckwith, the 1st Battalion of the 52nd Light Infantry, and the 28th and 91st Regiments.

Upon Moore’s main body reaching Bembimbre on 31 December, the men broke into the wine vaults and the streets were crowded with helpless drunkards. When Paget’s Reserve arrived next day the place was still littered with them and continued to be so when they fell back on the 2nd. Later in the day, the French cavalry rode into the place and cut down those wretched men by dozens.

When on 1 January, the main body reached Villafranca there were similar scenes of pillage and drunkenness. Here had been collected a large amount of supplies and these had to be destroyed so as to save them from the French. Time was necessary for this operation and to gain time the French had to be held back at all costs.

Six miles east of Villafranca, the road crosses the River Cua at

Cacabelos and here Paget made a stand on the 3rd. Three stragglers were brought in, who had been caught plundering, and Paget formed up his Division into a hollow square, with the intention of hanging the men on the spot. The ropes were actually round the men's necks when our Cavalry brought in word of the imminent approach of the French and shots were heard. Paget now told the men in the ranks that if they promised to behave well, he would pardon the culprits. The men shouted "Yes!" and he thereupon ordered the various corps to take up their fighting positions. Very soon, the rear-guard was sharply engaged. The Rifles were posted on the far (or enemy's) side of the river with four companies on the Bembimbre road, with them was a squadron of the 15th Hussars. On the western bank were posted the 52nd and three other Infantry Battalions with a Battery of Horse Artillery on some heights about 500 yards from the river.

Soon after noon two French Cavalry Regiments came on the scene under General Colbert. Seeing the Riflemen in position he sent to Marshal Soult for some infantry. An hour later two divisions of French Dragoons arrived.

Beckwith now ordered two companies of the Rifles (Norcott's and O'Hare's) to cover the withdrawal of the Battalion. But Colbert saw his chance and charged vigorously the squadron of the 15th. Our Hussars were forced to fall back at speed as did Moore and his Staff. The Riflemen, having let the fugitives through, endeavoured to form up across the street and opened a heavy fire on the Dragoons emptying many saddles and checking their advance, but not before some of them had got among our men who were compelled to seek refuge in the adjacent buildings. About one-third of the men belonging to these two companies were killed or taken prisoners.

The gallant Colbert now attempted to carry the bridge with his Cavalry but being met with a heavy rifle and musketry fire from both flanks, and a salvo of grape-shot from the Horse Battery, he was fain

to desist after severe losses. The Reserve was formed up on some heights about 500 yards west of the river with the Rifle Regiment occupying the hedgerows and walls near its bank. La Houssaye now forded the river below the bridge and dismounted some of his men who engaged our sharpshooters. At 4 p.m. some of Merle's Infantry Division arrived and about a thousand Voltigeurs crossed over with the aid of the horses of the Cavalry and the fighting became continuous.

Now it was that Colbert crossed the river and made a furious attack upon our Riflemen and Hussars who were near the guns. This was delivered by the Voltigeurs and a strong force of Cavalry. Our men at once threw themselves into the vineyards on either side of the road and from the banks lining the same poured a heavy and destructive fire into the masses of horsemen, so that the road was absolutely choked with their dead.¹ Colbert was engaged in pushing forward the French skirmishers when he received his death-wound from Rifleman Thomas Plunket, whose exploit at Buenos Ayres will be remembered. Plunket crept forward over a bank and throwing himself on his back on the snow-covered ground, with his rifle sling round his foot, fired with deliberate aim and shot the unfortunate French General dead.² Colbert's orderly trumpeter now rode up to his fallen chief and Plunket, re-loading rapidly, fired again and slew him likewise. It is recorded that he then jumped up and, amid the cheers of his comrades, ran in and joined one of the rear sections only just in time to escape the sabres of a dozen French Dragoons who spurred after him in pursuit. By nightfall General Merle had deployed his Division and threatened to turn the British right. Meanwhile Moore gradually withdrew his troops under cover of what has been described as a duel between the British Riflemen and the French 4th Léger, in which the latter lost about sixty men.

¹ Blakeney, 58.

² It is instructive to note how this favourite attitude of our Riflemen to secure a steady rest, has been resuscitated of late years at the School of Musketry, Hythe.

The total losses of the French and English in this sharply-contested affair are believed to have amounted to about 200 on either side. The Rifles had two officers Captain L. H. Bennett and Lieutenant C. Eeles wounded, one of these, Captain Bennett who was one of the original officers in the Rifle Corps died of his wounds a week later during the retreat to Coruña. Two Sergeants and 17 Riflemen were killed and 4 Sergeants and 44 men were taken prisoners, of these many were wounded. No return of wounded was ever made and 8 men were missing and unaccounted for and were doubtless among the slain.¹

Once again, Moore has been blamed for not standing to fight at Cacabelos. In the evening, the Reserve fell back to Villafranca.

Between Villafranca and Las Herrerias the French patrols attacked the Rifles' piquets and a few of our men were wounded. The Riflemen drove back the French who failed to discover that the British Army had quitted the position. At 10 p.m. the retreat was continued and the Reserve marched throughout the night, halting at Nogales after an 18 mile march. The Cavalry had already gone on ahead to Lugo. About midnight Moore received reports as to the suitability of Ferrol, Coruña and Vigo as points for re-embarkation and finally decided on Coruña. He also issued orders for the Army to halt and assemble at Lugo.

During the 4th the Reserve Division had the good fortune to meet a Spanish convoy, which they promptly annexed, putting the animals into their own waggons and fitting themselves out with boots and clothing. They then destroyed the rest of it. On the same day the French captured over nine hundred British prisoners (stragglers), and five Spanish guns, which had been perforce abandoned. That night the French Dragoons bivouacked within a mile of our Riflemen with the Reserve, and Merle's whole Division was only ten miles astern of them.

¹ The Pay lists 20 February 1809 show 75 casualties, Norcott's company alone having 33.

West of Villafranca the road to Coruña runs through the defile of Piedrafita and then winds along the spurs of Monte Cebrero on to the bleak uplands of Lugo.¹ No less than fifty miles of deep snow had now to be traversed by Moore's shattered and disorganized army. The nature of this desolate country and the horrors of the retreat may be gathered from Adam Neale's *Spanish Campaign of 1808*. "As we looked round on gaining the highest point of these slippery precipices and observed the rear of the army winding along the narrow road, we could see the whole track marked out by our wretched people, who lay expiring from fatigue and the severity of the cold."

In the British Museum there is a small sketch book containing some forty water-colour drawings made on the spot by one who accompanied Sir John Moore in his retreat. Many and graphic as are the accounts of the terrors of that retreat, no words can convey the nature of the task which our soldiers had to overcome so well as do these sketches.² That the sufferings and horrors of this retreat were not confined to the British alone is testified by the French writer Commandant Balagny, who says that at this period the French suffered greatly from cold and exhaustion and had been compelled to leave part of their Artillery behind.³

On 5 January Paget's rear-guard left Nogales and throughout the day the pursuing French Cavalry were in touch with them. It was on this day that the waggons conveying the British treasure had to be abandoned and the barrels containing some £25,000 were thrown over the precipices along the road-side. La Houssaye's Dragoons gathered some of this windfall and at sunset found the British rear-guard holding the bridge across a stream at Santa Maria de Constantin. Fortescue records that this day the French captured two more abandoned guns,

¹ Oman, i., 570-571.

² The artist was Sir Robert Ker Porter, a civilian who earned for himself the title of "The first British War Correspondent."

³ Fortescue, vi., 369.

also a hundred British stragglers, "a plain proof that those whom they had taken so far were only the scum of the army."¹ East of this bridge and consequently on the side of the enemy there is a small hill which, if occupied by a hostile force, would render the passage of the river difficult. Moore, in consequence, posted a battery on this hill and "guarded it, as usual, by the brave Rifle Corps."² The enemy were thus held in check until the whole of the Reserve had defiled across the narrow bridge, after which the guns limbered up and trotted down the hill, the Riflemen following them at the double and passing the bridge without the loss of a man. There was no French infantry but the dismounted Dragoons dashed forward, only to find that the Reserve was posted on the far side. A desultory skirmish ensued until darkness set in. A little after midnight the Reserve moved off quietly and on the following morning joined the main body about six miles east of Lugo. During all this retreat Moore had accompanied the Reserve, riding with his friend Edward Paget. His cheerful demeanour sustained the spirits of the way-worn suffering soldiers, he praised their superior discipline on the march and warmly applauded their gallant conduct in action.³

The whole of Moore's force was now concentrated in front of Lugo and numbered about 19,000 of all arms. He occupied a strong position with his right on the Minho, unfordable at this part; in front of him was a ravine and broken and enclosed ground and his left was on some rugged hills. On the afternoon of the 6th Soult arrived with two Divisions of Dragoons and Merle's Division of Infantry, and made a reconnaissance in force opening with his artillery on the British troops who replied. Soult thereupon determined to wait till he was stronger before attacking. On the morning of the 7th two more French

¹ "Life of Sir John Moore," ii., 201.

² Fortescue, vi., 370.

³ Cope, 36.

Divisions arrived bringing up his available force to about 13,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry, but he was still without his artillery. It is significant to note that only a week earlier these same Divisions had numbered 20,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry. It was not only the retreating British who suffered from the severe weather and the loss of discipline. In the afternoon he sent a Brigade and some light infantry to threaten Moore's left, his weakest spot, and at the same time made Merle's Division demonstrate against the British centre. There was some sharp outpost work in which the Rifles bore a hand and Leith's Brigade suffered some losses.

On 8 January Soult's artillery at last came up, also many stragglers rejoined their corps and he found himself with 18,000 men. But he hesitated to attack and Moore, after waiting all day, decided to retreat after nightfall. He was in no position to attack, he had but one day's bread for his men and hence had he beaten Soult, could not have taken the offensive; "a defeat would have been ruin and victory useless" in the words of Napier, exactly describes the situation.

So it was that after remaining drawn up for battle all day, after dark, the army was ordered to retire on Lugo. The Reserve once again was thrown out as a rear-guard, the fires were heaped up and left burning brightly to deceive the enemy. Then followed one of the most appalling night marches. The weather was terrific, a furious gale with drenching rain and sleet and pitchy darkness. Several battalions spent the night wandering round and round. Only Paget's Reserve, which contrived always to be right when everyone else went wrong, struck the road at the correct point.¹ Our Engineers succeeded in destroying the bridge across the Minho, 8 miles north-west of Lugo and thus materially delayed the French pursuit. By 10 o'clock on the morning of the 9th the men were thoroughly worn out and a halt was made, the Reserve holding Astariz. Throughout this period of the retreat the

¹ Fortescue, vi., 372.

British Army suffered terribly. In the Rifle Regiment the men were in a state of starvation, many without shoes and almost all in rags. The officers were, many of them, barefooted.¹

Late in the evening, the retreat was continued in teeth of a furious westerly gale. One Division was allowed to fall out and take shelter with the natural result that it could never be collected again. In fact, from this time forward, the main body, with the exception of the Guards, moved as a disorderly mob. The Reserve always maintained their discipline.²

On the morning of the 10th the French overtook the rear-guard east of Betanzos and the Riflemen were sharply engaged at the bridge. At Betanzos Moore halted the main body for the day to rest his men who were suffering terribly from swollen and lacerated feet and marching thence on the morning of the 11th reached Coruña on the same night. On this day the Reserve reached El Burgo 4 miles south-east of Coruña where they destroyed the bridge over the river Mero, as well as another 5 miles higher up at Cambria. Two companies under Major Norcott were posted in the village, the remainder of the Battalion being with the rest of the Reserve on the Coruña road behind. On the night of the 10th the French cavalry under Franceschi, which had been delayed by the destruction of the bridge across the Minho, were only eleven miles from Betanzos and on the morning of the 11th Marshal Soult rode at their head and ordering his infantry to follow at all speed came up with the British rear-guard at El Burgo in the afternoon. The Dragoons dismounted and attacked vigorously, but they were no match either in skill or in armament for the British Riflemen. Early on the 12th the French Infantry arrived and a sharp fire was kept up all day between the opposing forces across the narrow river, but without results. The next day, the French managed to cross the Mero River at Celas, 7 miles inland and in the evening Paget withdrew from El Burgo to the heights in front of Coruña.

¹ Cope, 37.

² Fortescue, vi., 373.

The main body of the British Army reached Coruña on the night of the 11th. The spectacle was a sad one, the men in miserable state, moving without order. That the corps concerned were largely themselves to blame for the disorder is well shown by the fact that the two Battalions of the 1st Guards (now the Grenadiers) "each of them eight hundred strong, strode by in columns of sections, with drums beating, the drum-major twirling his staff at their head and the men keeping step. . . ."¹

But what about the rear-guard and with the rear-guard the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Regiment which had been daily covering the withdrawal of the rear-guard? Napier's eulogy of the splendid services of Edward Paget's rear-guard during the retreat will appeal to all.

"For twelve days these hardy warriors had covered the retreat, during which time they had traversed eighty miles of road in two marches, passed several nights under arms in the snow on the mountains, were seven times engaged with the enemy, and had assembled at the outposts having fewer men missing, including those who had fallen in battle, than any other Division of the army: an admirable instance of the value of good discipline."

Fortescue's tribute is equally telling.

"They had done harder work, they had endured severer marches, and they had undergone greater privations than the rest of the army; and they had been more frequently engaged in petty actions with the enemy. Yet there were relatively fewer men missing from their ranks than from any other Division for, like the Guards, they had faced the high ordeal of the march like disciplined men."

The losses of the Rifles during the various minor affairs between 8 and 14 January amounted to 48 killed and wounded left in the hands of the enemy.

Moore at once began to fortify the landward front of Coruña and

¹ Fortescue, vi., 375.

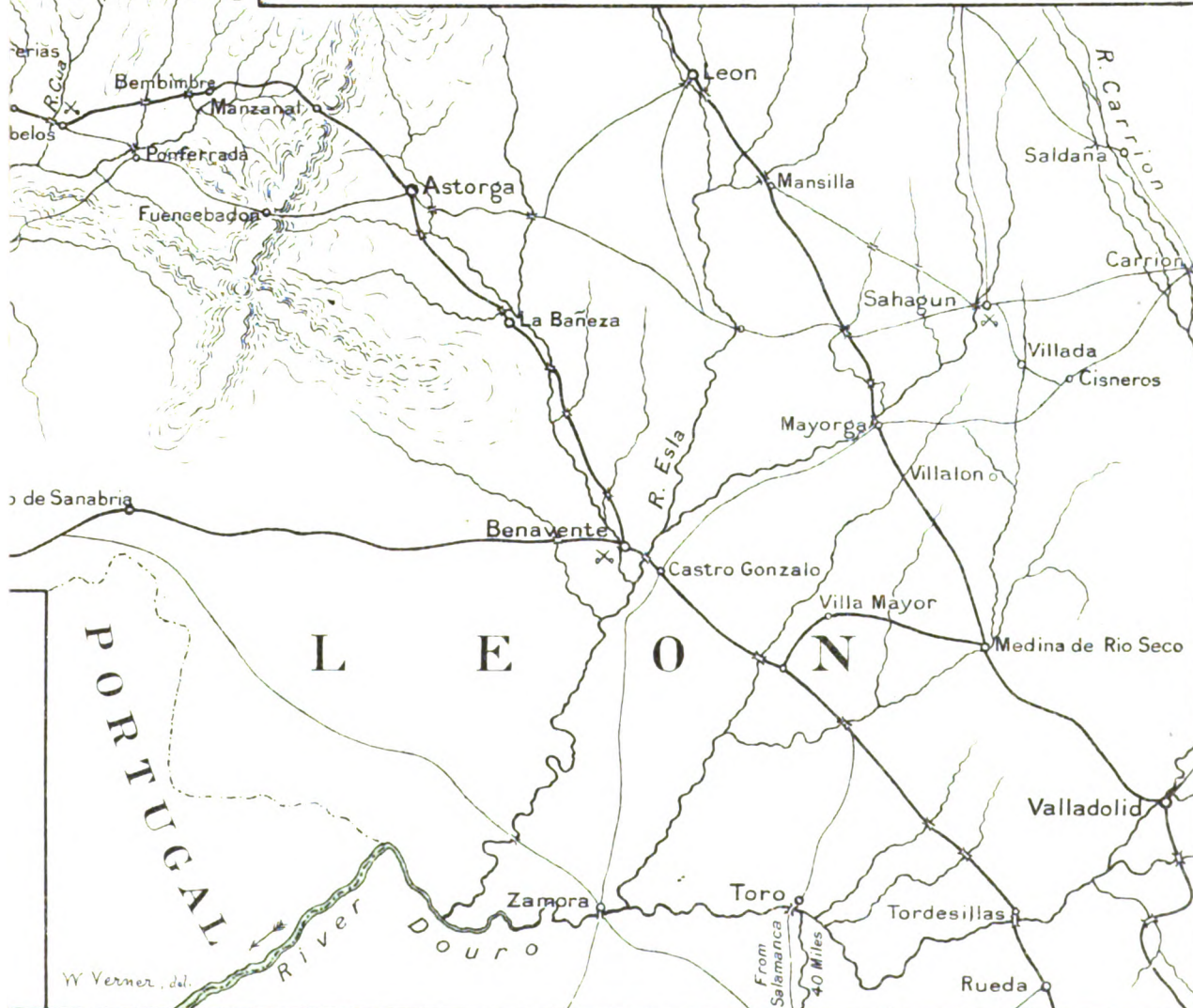
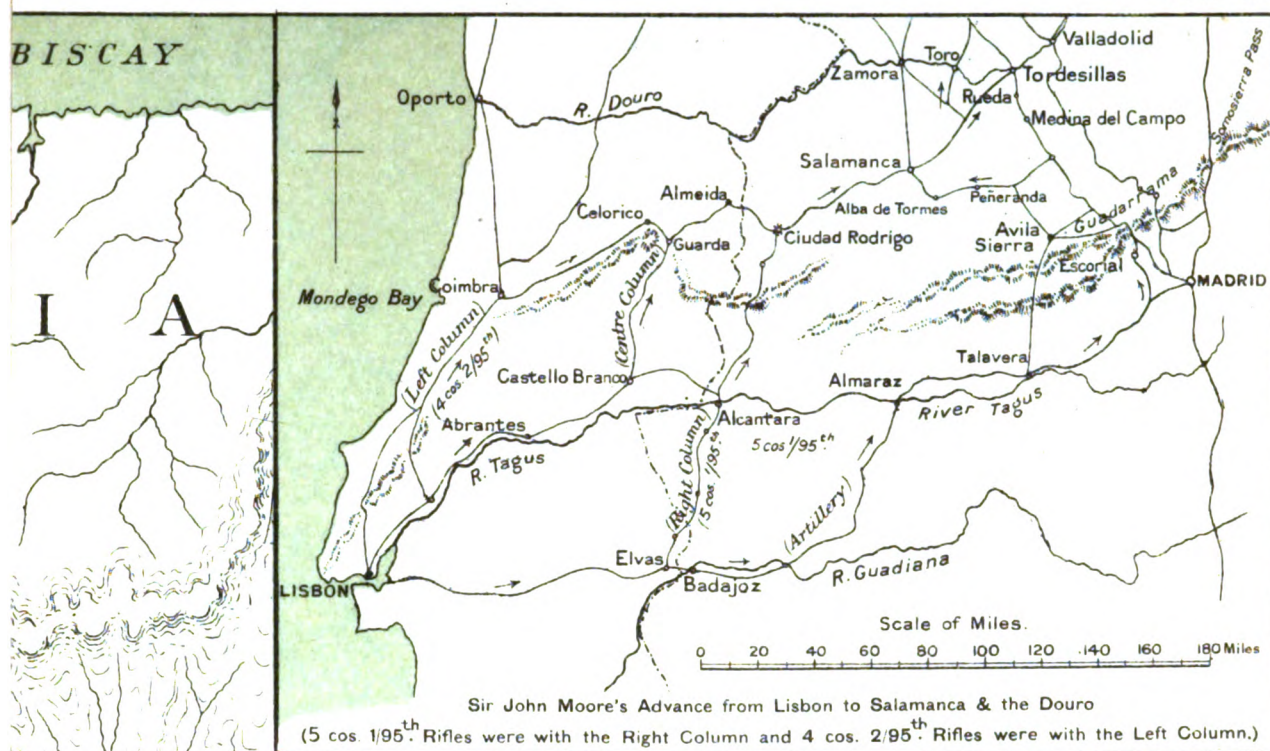
to destroy the defences on the seaward side. Soult had arrived before the broken bridge of El Burgo on 11th and as we have seen got some cavalry across the River Mero above it on the 12th. Merle's Horse Artillery now came up and drove the British back from the bridge and Soult began to repair it.

Moore found a large amount of arms, equipment and stores at Coruña and at once re-armed his men with new muskets. On the 13th he blew up the two magazines containing 12,000 barrels of gunpowder, which had been formed on the heights of Peñasquedo, shattering, it is said, every window in Coruña, some three miles distant. On the same afternoon the Reserve was ordered to fall back from El Burgo and joined Moore's main body drawn up for battle on the heights south of Coruña. That evening the French partially repaired the bridge of El Burgo and some infantry crossed. On the 14th the bridge was strong enough to bear artillery and Soult ordered his whole army to advance.

On the afternoon of the 14th the fleet of transports sailed into the harbour and Moore commenced to re-embark his shattered army. He had lost during the retreat altogether nearly 5,000 men, killed, died of exposure, wounded, or taken prisoners. Craufurd's force of 3,500 had, as we have seen, marched to Vigo. That night the sick and wounded, the dismounted cavalry, 1,950 strong, some fifty guns and about 1,000 horses were embarked. Sufficient horses were kept to draw 12 guns, 9 British and 3 Spanish; some 2,000 horses foundered and unfit for work were destroyed.

After all these deductions Moore had left about 15,000 infantry and 200 artillerymen with which to give battle to Soult.

¹ Record of Services, Lieut.-General G. Cookson, R.A. (War Office); also "Royal Military Calendar," ii., 179.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE BATTLE OF CORUÑA, 1809.

Sir John Moore's outpost line—Soult drives in the British piquets and occupies the heights—His available numbers—Description of French and British positions—The British order of Battle—Soult's tactics—The commencement of the battle—The great attack on Elvina—Moore orders the Rifles to protect his right flank—Desperate struggle in Elvina—Moore is mortally wounded—The work of the 95th Rifle Regiment—Beckwith's advance—Is supported by the 52nd Light Infantry—The attack on the French left flank—The Rifles and 52nd repulsed—Paget's reserve Regiments come up—Renewed attack on French flank—Nightfall and termination of the fighting all along the line—Moore's terrible wound—His death and burial—The British army withdraws and re-embarks unmolested—The return voyage of the Transports—Sensation in England at appearance of soldiers—The losses in the Campaign—Return of Craufurd and the 2nd Battalion to England—The losses in the Rifle Regiment—Major General Coote Manningham—His services—Death from the hardships of the Campaign—Memorial in Westminster Abbey.

THE outpost line taken up by Sir John Moore to cover his little See Map XI.,
p. 214. army whilst the work of embarkation was being carried out extended along the heights of Peñasquedo, about two miles from El Burgo and three miles south of Coruña. The piquets on the left were found by the 5th Regiment whilst the Rifles were on the extreme right.

On the morning of the 15th Soult, having repaired the bridge at El Burgo which the British had blown up before retiring, pushed Merle's and Mermet's Infantry Divisions across the river and with Lorges' and La Houssaye's Cavalry advanced on the heights and quickly drove in

the British piquets. There was some sharp fighting on the British left and the 5th fell back to the village of Piedralonga. On the right the Rifles had some skirmishing with Mermet's Voltigeurs and fell back on Elvina and Someso. Soult now established himself along the Peñasquedo heights. In the afternoon he was joined by Delaborde's Division and having decided to attack Moore on the following day he sent word to Franceschi's Division of Light Cavalry, which was moving on his left flank, to draw in to him. The actual numbers of the French who were thus assembled under Soult were 16,156 of all arms with 20 guns.¹ He had sustained considerable losses during his determined pursuit, not only from the hardships his men had endured but from the vast amount of straggling which had taken place ; and it was in order to bring up his rearmost Divisions and to collect his stragglers that he had hitherto delayed taking any action which might prematurely commit him to a battle.

The heights of Peñasquedo are about three miles south of Coruña, running almost east and west for about two miles, and form an ideal position to cover that town. Unfortunately Moore's numbers were too few to justify him in holding them, and he was compelled to make shift with a more restricted position nearer to the fortress. This was the heights of Monte Mero, a ridge almost parallel to that of Peñasquedo, about 2,000 yards in length with its left flank on the rocky shores of the estuary of El Burgo and the right in rear of the little village of Elvina. The main defects of this position were that although it was nearly 450 feet above the sea, it was commanded by the Peñasquedo ridge which is from 100 to 200 feet higher and distant only 1,200 yards from the left and less than 800 from the right ; extremely close ranges even in those days for heavy Artillery, also it can be easily turned

¹ This force was composed as follows : Infantry 11,928, Cavalry 3,298, and 930 artillerymen. These are the numbers given by Balagny and accepted by Fortescue. Oman says 20,000 men with 40 guns, but he is obviously incorrect in several particulars (i., 286).

on the western flank and any troops on it cut off from the road entering Coruña. Moore saw this and provided against such an emergency by posting one-third of his force in echelon about a mile in rear of his right flank. The troops allotted for this critical point of the coming battle were the Reserve under Paget and Fraser's Division, with 3 out of the 9 guns available. The general line of battle was along the Monte Mero for a space of about 1,500 yards and this was held by Baird's and Hope's Divisions each with two Brigades in front line and one in reserve. Baird's right Brigade rested on the village of Elvina, his left Brigade was commanded by Major-General Coote Manningham, the founder of the Rifle Corps. His other Brigade, the Guards, was posted about 300 yards in rear. Hope's Division was on Baird's left, Leith's and Hill's Brigades being deployed in first line with Catlin Craufurd's Brigade behind a ridge 600 yards in rear. Moore's available guns, which were only light 6-pounders, were posted in the intervals between the Brigades.

Soult's plan of attack was to hold the British troops in front with Delaborde's and Merle's Divisions, 22 Battalions in all, and to turn their right with Mermet's 12 Battalions and La Houssaye's four regiments of Dragoons. He caused ten heavy guns, 8 and 12-pounders, to be brought up to the northern slopes of the Peñasquedo heights and these formed in battery only 600 yards south of and immediately above the village of Elvina and less than 900 yards from the right of the British main position. Ten other guns were posted in the intervals along the French line.

Throughout the morning of the 16th Soult seems to have hesitated. By all accounts he was still uncertain of the strength of the British. Moore finding he was not attacked decided to withdraw and orders had been sent for Paget's Division to embark and for the others to follow at dusk,¹ when at about a quarter to two Soult suddenly commenced an

¹ Blakeney, 114.

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attack in force. The Battery above Elvina opened a very severe fire which raked the whole of the British right and two Brigades of Mermet's Division advanced in mass of columns covered by a dense cloud of skirmishers. One of these columns emerged from a wood on the left of the battery whilst a third Brigade appeared from the western side of the same wood and swept round so as to outflank the British line whilst La Houssaye's Dragoons carried on the same enveloping movement on their outer flank. Bentinck's Brigade subsequently were engaged in some desperate fighting on the slopes above the village of Elvina where they were fully exposed to the storm of artillery fire from the heights. The 4th Regiment were compelled to change front to a flank with their right-half Battalion to stem the advance of the left French Column. These columns deployed from mass into line of battalion columns and covered by a strong firing line pushed through Elvina and commenced to ascend the slopes of Monte Mero. It was during this advance on Elvina that Moore seeing the intention of the French to turn the right of his line sent word to Paget to send the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Regiment to protect his flank and bar the interval between the Monte Mero and the heights half a mile westward, known as San Cristobal, and to bring up the remainder of the Reserve. Meanwhile Elvina had been taken and retaken several times. At first the 42nd and 50th met the French tirailleurs with a heavy fire from their deployed line, and, pushing on, captured the village; part of the 50th advanced almost up to the foot of the heights beyond and after losing heavily had to fall back. Then Mermet's Reserve retook the village. Moore now brought up the Guards and it was whilst ordering them to occupy some houses that he received his mortal wound. Elvina was then taken by the British for the second time. Mermet now sent in his last reserve and Merle's Division advanced on the left of Elvina. Now it was that Coote Manningham's Brigade fell upon the French and a desperate fight ensued. The brunt of the fighting fell on

Manningham's Regiments which were exposed to a terrible artillery fire. Finally the French fell back.

On the British left the battle was of a less severe nature. Delaborde sent a column under Foy to take the village of Piedralonga. Our 14th Regiment made a fine counter-attack and drove them back to the far end of the village and out of it.

So much for the fight in the centre and the left. I must now describe in detail the movements on the right where the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Regiment were very actively engaged throughout the day. Beckwith upon receiving the order to advance pushed forward, his line of skirmishers extending across the valley down the centre of which flows the Monelos Stream. La Houssaye sent one of his Regiments of Dragoons to the lower spurs of the San Cristobal, where it dismounted and opened fire on the advancing skirmishers, but the fire of the Riflemen was too severe and the Dragoons quickly fell back and the flank was cleared. Beckwith pressed on until his right occupied the enclosures at Someso, about half a mile to the right of the village of Elvina, the Riflemen forming a line of skirmishers across the valley whence they brought a fire on the flank of Mermet's column, formed of the 47th Regiment which was deploying into line of Battalions preparatory to assaulting Elvina and which was already under a heavy fire from the 4th Foot holding the enclosures on the right of Elvina. Throughout this advance La Houssaye's Dragoons threatened the outer flank of the extended Riflemen, and in addition Franceschi's Division of Light Cavalry was reported to be somewhere on the extreme British right flank.¹ Paget now sent up the 52nd to reinforce the Rifles and they extended on their left and the two regiments made a

¹ Throughout the Battle this Division had to be taken into account, and for over a century it was believed to have been on the right flank of Moore's forces. Only recently it has been proved by the French writer Commandant Balagny not to have been present. Fortescue, vi., 381.

vigorous advance towards the left of the French position. Upon the Riflemen emerging from the enclosed ground near Someso they were threatened by two of La Houssaye's Dragoon Regiments which twice attempted to charge but were impeded in their movements by the broken and enclosed nature of the ground. As it was they came under a stinging rifle fire and were compelled to withdraw. Now it was that the 52nd and the 95th Rifles delivered an audacious stroke right on the flank of Soult's position. The narrative of this part of the battle is very difficult to follow out, but from a careful comparison of all the authorities I have come to the conclusion that the Riflemen delivered not one but two separate attacks upon Soult's flank and that these two attacks have been considered hitherto by many as one. Here is what seems to have occurred when the 52nd and 95th thus advanced.

The 1st Battalion Records state :—

“Lt.-Colonel Beckwith pushed forward with the whole of the Riflemen dashing into the very midst of their Artillery and would inevitably have captured or destroyed them all in a few minutes had not two Battalions of Voltigeurs moved so rapidly to their assistance as to oblige us to fall rapidly back for the moment. A very sharp skirmish was afterwards kept up for two hours against this force.”

It is just this difference between being driven back “for the moment ” and for “two hours ” that, as far as I can gather, has caused the confusion in this part of the story. In an old copy of a map of the battle of Coruña drawn in 1839 which I have by me¹ the same incident as above described in the 1st Battalion Records is shown graphically and can be easily followed out by referring to the map in this volume. On this old map the advance of the 95th from Someso supported by the 52nd from Monelos is shown, with our men holding the summit marked “480 ” on the map in this book. Also “two French columns

¹ This map is one of the well-known series which the Gentlemen Cadets at Sandhurst were made to copy in former years.

repulsing the attack " and driving back the Rifles and 52nd to Someso and eventually occupying the hill "410" just 500 yards south-west of it. I make no doubt but that the incident was as above described and that the Riflemen had almost gained the rear of the French position when the two columns of Voltigeurs drove them back so vigorously. Now it was that Paget brought up his other Regiments. The 28th had been in support of the 52nd and 95th and the 20th and 91st also came up and after a protracted struggle the two Battalions of Voltigeurs gave way and were pursued right up to the French position. In this old map the British troops are drawn as having reached the lower edge of the big wood west of the main French battery and there is a note that "the 52nd, 95th and 28th advanced to this spot." Now in corroboration of Beckwith's account and of this old map we have Blakeney's narrative who was with the 28th in support of the Rifles and 52nd and who says:—

"We now pushed on altogether and turned the French left and were preparing to charge and carry the French battery. Their Cavalry had retreated behind their great battery where they became useless from the rocky nature of the ground ; the battery itself was all but in our possession and only required the short time necessary to march into it."¹

This then was the culmination of the second attack made just before dusk, and apparently a considerable time, between one and two hours, after Beckwith's first attempt.

Mr. Oman in describing this incident states :—

"The advance was completely successful and Paget pushed forward, taking numerous prisoners from the broken Infantry. So far did he advance in his victorious onslaught that he approached from the flank the main French Battery on the heights of Peñasquedo and thought that (if leave had been given him) he would have been able to capture it, for its Infantry supports were broken and the Cavalry had gone off far to the right. But Hope sent no orders to his colleague and the Reserve halted at dusk at the foot of the French position."²

¹ Blakeney, 117.

² Oman, i., 590.

The Regimental Records of the 1st Battalion end with the terse statement "we eventually drove them (the Voltigeurs) back with very considerable loss on their part, taking 7 officers and 156 men prisoners which the Battalion embarked and brought safely to England."

Sir William Cope follows this account in his History, and as he knew personally many of those who fought at Coruña I have accepted the story as told above and have marked the position of our Riflemen as well as those of the other Regiments of Paget's Reserve on the map in this volume accordingly and I only trust that those who carefully study the matter will approve of my decision.

It is not very easy to trace the movements of the Rifles on this eventful day. In the morning the Reserve Division was posted near the small hamlet of Oza a mile outside the gates of Coruña. But it is unquestionable that the 95th on the morning of the battle were on the west spurs of the Monte Mero (as will be seen in Captain Basil Hall's account which I give later on). He saw them there when they were preparing their dinners (see p. 209). Blakeney describes how the Reserve after the men had dined were marched towards the transports but had not proceeded a hundred yards when they heard the firing of guns, they instantly counter-marched and passed through the village which they had left only 20 minutes before. Immediately after reaching the village they halted. Shortly after their arrival Moore sent word for the 95th to be detached from the Reserve and to move to the right to protect the right flank from the French Cavalry. Soon after, the 52nd were sent forward in extended order and formed a loose chain across the valley.¹ I can only conclude that the 95th were withdrawn from the outposts shortly after the time when Captain Hall interviewed them, and that they rejoined the Reserve Division at Oza between 1 o'clock and 1.30. A Battalion could march from Elvina to Oza in about 20 minutes. The action commenced about 1.45 p.m.

Before leaving the subject I will give some extracts from the

¹ Blakeney, 114, 115.

account of the Battle written by a naval officer, Captain Basil Hall, who had the unusual opportunity of being present as a spectator of the action. They are of peculiar interest to those interested in the story of the Regiment since not only do they present vividly the mental and bodily condition of our gallant soldiers on the morning of the battle but they bear tribute to the undefeated cheeriness of our Riflemen just before the heavy fighting began.

“As we sailed into the harbour of Coruña on the morning of 15 January, we could distinctly make out with our glasses the two lines of troops; for although the ridge upon which the English were posted lay nearer to the sea, it was of such inconsiderable height compared with that occupied by the French that we could discover the Army of the enemy mustering thick along the sky-line and overlooking ours in a very ominous and threatening manner. Towards evening there was some skirmishing of a trivial nature on the right of our line, part of which we could distinguish from the mast-heads of the frigate. . . . When the night fell a double row of fires along the summits of the two hills pointed out in a very striking manner the position of the rival hosts. . . . The night was very dark and as fresh fuel was piled on the fires they were darkened for a moment or tossed into sudden blaze by being stirred up by the groups of soldiers whom we saw or fancied we saw standing between us and the light. . . . I did not sleep at all being employed nearly the whole night in the ship's boats embarking what are called the encumbrances of the Army consisting of the remainder of the baggage which the retreat had left them—some wounded and sick men and a few guns and horses. In this curious assembly I observed several women who, strange to say had gone through the whole campaign unbroken in spirit and apparently not much fatigued. They even talked as if they had done no great things. We were much amused likewise by seeing an officer's servant with a huge violoncello under his charge which he told us had accompanied his master through the country from Lisbon. . . .”

On the 16th Hall got permission from his Captain to go ashore with the Purser and gives the following account of what he saw :—

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“As the morning was fine the scene looked highly picturesque and though painful in many respects, it possessed an uncommon degree of interest. I need hardly mention that there was none of the show and flourish of a review to be seen here, for the soldiers lay scattered about, wearied and dispirited, ragged in their dress and many of them sickly or rather broken down in appearance by the fatigue of this celebrated retreat. Most of their chins had been untouched by a razor for some days, perhaps weeks, while their hands and faces being rather less familiar with soap and water than with the smoke of their muskets and the charcoal of their cooking fires gave evidence enough of the want of comforts to which the army had been so long exposed. The muskets of the troops were piled in pyramids along the ridge amongst the men who were stretched on the ground fast asleep not in any very precise order, but still within a few yards on either side of the summit line of the ridge. I observed many of these hardy fellows lying on their backs with their hands under their heads and faces half covered by what remained of a hat becoming still more deeply tanned in the sun. Many however were sitting on the grass which covered the ground and looking in silence with very wistful eyes towards the ships. Along the whole line of troops however I observed only one or two officers asleep. Generally speaking they were collected into little knots looking about them but seldom speaking. In fact one of the things that struck me most was the profound almost melancholy silence which prevailed amongst so many thousands of men. As our spirits were not weighed down by any of the depressing causes which affected these gentlemen, we talked away merrily to the officers but in most cases were disappointed to find so little animation amongst them. We forgot how differently from our own their lives had lately been spent . . . marching, fighting, and starving almost without intermission since the day on which we landed them two months before. . . .

“We began our morning’s excursion nearly at the left of the British position in the midst of Sir John Hope’s Division and then turning to the right hand, threaded our way amongst the sleeping soldiers, piled muskets, and camp equipage along the whole line, till the ridge upon which the army was in position lost itself in the valley just opposite to the high rocky knoll, forming the extreme left of the ground occupied by the French. The 95th the well known Rifle Corps were stationed hereabouts, and I was happy to find an old friend alive and merry

amongst the officers of this regiment. These gentlemen were in greater spirits than most of the others whom we had conversed with. We were surprised indeed to find them laughing heartily, and upon asking the cause of their mirth, was shown a good-sized pig, the regimental cooks were cutting up for a dinner which they said would be ready in a few minutes. It seems this unfortunate grunter had been disturbed by the French pickets near the village of Elvina, just in front of the spot where the 95th were stationed. He had made good his retreat, as he thought, but fell right upon our friends the *Sharpshooters* who in a trice charged and despatched him with their swords and bayonets. These merry soldiers, delighted with their good luck, pressed us much to stay and partake of their windfall; but we wished to retrace our steps along a part of the line, so as to gain the road to Coruña and return on board before sunset, as we had been ordered. . . . Upon this we parted—they to their welcome dinner, while we retraced our steps amongst the weary soldiers who certainly did look in such a miserable plight, that it seemed as if the enemy would have little more to do than gallop across the valley and catch them all napping. . . . I had just asked the commanding officer of one of the regiments—I forget which, near the top of the position—whether he thought anything could possibly rouse the men up. In reply, he said with a very expressive smile and a slight nod of his head, implying that even then he suspected what was about to take place, ‘You’ll see by and by, sir, if the French there choose to come over.’

“These words were hardly uttered when a movement along the whole enemy’s line became apparent even to our inexperienced eyes. Almost at the instant when this stir was observed, a furious cannonading was opened from a battery mounting eleven guns—8 and 12-pounders—of the existence of which, I believe, no person on our side had previously the smallest suspicion, for up to this moment it had been completely masked. This formidable battery which overhung the right of our position, was so placed that it raked nearly the half of the British line, and of course the fire from it galled the troops excessively. Had we remained to share the picnic with our friends of the 95th, we must have partaken likewise of the first salvo from these French guns, and in all probability this story of the action might never have fallen into Naval hands.

“The effect of these characteristic preparatory notes of war was

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extremely curious. At the first discharge from the French battery the whole of the British troops from one end of the line to the other started on their feet, snatched up their arms and formed themselves with as much regularity and apparent coolness as if they had been exercising on parade in Hyde Park. I really could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw these men spring from the ground as if touched by a magic wand, all full of life and vigour, though but one minute before they had been stretched out listlessly in the sun. I have already noticed the silence which reigned over the field—now however there was a loud hum and occasionally a shout and many a burst of laughter, along a distance of nearly a mile—in the midst of which sound a peculiar sharp click, click, of fixing bayonets fell distinctly on the ear.

“Many thousand stand of new arms had been issued to the troops from the stores at Coruña, and I could observe the men rapping the flints, tightening the screws and tossing about their firelocks, with the air of veteran sportsmen eager for a shot to try their new pieces. The officers up to this moment so languid, were seen everywhere brushing along the line speaking to the sergeants, and making arrangements which we did not pretend to understand ; aides-de-camp galloped past us, dropping their orders into the ears of the commanding officers of the different corps as they moved swiftly along the position. Not a single face was now turned towards the ships, and we could scarcely get a soul to answer one of our questions—all was animation and cheerfulness over minds from which but a short time before it seemed as if every particle of spirit had fled. There appeared to be much conversation going on, and not a little jesting amongst the men, while they were bracing themselves up, buckling on their knapsacks and making various other arrangements, preparatory to the hard work they foresaw they would have to perform before the night fell. Their kits, or stock of clothes, none of which were very large were soon on their shoulders, and in a very few moments the army was perfectly ready to meet that of the enemy, who by this time was pelting rapidly down the side of the opposite heights in three immense close columns. I have no precise notion how many men might be in each of these square solid masses—I think I have heard it stated at six or seven thousand.¹ They kept

¹ Each column seems to have consisted of four or five battalions, about 500 to 600 strong, giving a strength of 2,000 to 2,500 bayonets. Probably the three columns numbered together 7,000.

steadily together and looked as dark as the blackest thunder-cloud I ever saw ; and I must say their appearance was the most imposing and formidable I recollect to have seen either before or since.

“On the English side there were only about a dozen¹ small guns which made but a feeble return to the fierce attack of the enemy’s great raking battery, which continued tearing open the English ranks in dreadful style until the two armies became so completely intermixed in personal conflict that the enemy’s shot could no longer be directed with certainty against their antagonists, without an equal chance of hitting their friends. . . .

“The intermixture of the combatants on this day was probably rendered greater than usual in consequence of the peculiar nature of the ground. It could hardly be called a plain for it was crossed in all directions by roads cut into the earth like deep trenches 8 ft. or 10 ft. below the surface ; while on the ground above there was spread a complete network of walls, hedges and rows of trees, of such intricacy that I should imagine it was nearly impossible to form fifty men abreast anywhere. Thus each cornfield or little patch of garden ground became the scene of a separate fight.

“We were quite near enough to see the soldiers scrambling over the walls and meeting one another in these open spaces or amongst the trees, while the smoke and the flashes of musketry from the hollow roads showed that a subterranean sort of warfare was going on at the same time. To us the field of battle certainly looked as complete a scene of confusion as anything could possibly be, and I suppose it must have presented nearly a similar aspect even to the more practised observation of the commander of the destructive French battery on our right ; for about this period I speak of, he ceased firing at the troops and turned all his attention towards the few English field-pieces which I have already spoken of. . . .

“Some of these balls went completely over the English guns, grazed the crest of the ridge and falling on the high road, rolled down the other side of the hill half-way to Coruña. Several hit our guns, and made a fine scatter amongst the artillerymen ; while every shot that fell short came plump into the little hollow space where we nautical men had established ourselves and from which we had proposed to view the battle at our ease.

There were only six in action at this time, three more were with the Reserve.

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"The Purser and I now held a council of war, and the proverbial result of such deliberations followed. We agreed unanimously that under existing circumstances a retreat was the proper measure. . . . The road leading into Coruña and lying between us and the severest part of the action was at no great distance. It was soon covered along its whole length with wounded men—some walking alone—some supported—and a good many were laid in carts. We observed Sir David Baird led or carried off the field ; we could not exactly make out which but I think he was walking. Shortly afterwards another and a larger group passed bearing along a wounded officer. It was apparent from the appearance which this party presented, that some person of consequence was under their charge and while we were trying to discover who it could possibly be that engaged so much attention an officer rode up the hill. After he had delivered his message, he pointed to the party which had just gone by and told us that in the centre was carried along their brave Commander-in-Chief, Sir John Moore, who a few minutes before had been struck off his horse by a cannon shot.

"The command now devolved on Sir John Hope, whom we could readily distinguish from his being surrounded not only by his own staff, but by the aides-de-camp of his two wounded senior officers. . . . The Battle which had commenced nearly at the foot of the English hill had gradually though not without several fluctuations moved itself forward towards the French side of the valley and the much-contested village of Elvina remained finally in our possession.

"As the battle did not commence till between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, and was very obstinately contested on both sides, no great time was allowed before the night set in for these important manœuvres which form so much of the interest of battles. All was sheer hard fighting. The eventual advantage, however was manifestly on the side of the English, for it was easy to distinguish that the struggle was carried on towards the end of the day at a position removed considerably in advance of that on which the English had stood when they were first attacked." ¹

I must now return to the great leader, who at the supreme moment of the battle was laid low. Moore was struck down by a round shot

¹ "Fragments of Voyages and Travels," by Captain Basil Hall, R.N., 1831.

when close to the west end of the village of Elvina the ball carrying away his left shoulder and leaving his arm hanging by the exposed tendons. At this critical moment he was organizing a counter-attack on the French centre. As a result of his fall this was never delivered. The French kept possession of one end of the village and the British held on to the other and continued firing on one another till darkness set in, upon which both sides withdrew. Soult had thus been checked and severely checked at every point. At dusk the British held points in advance of all those they occupied in the morning. The French claim to have held on to the southern end of the hamlet of Piedralonga, and this is likely enough but it gave them no tactical advantage. Shortly before Moore received his wound Sir David Baird was also struck down by a cannon ball and the command thus devolved on Sir John Hope. This change of command for a time prevented the issue of further orders and hence Paget's vigorous counter-attack was not carried through. Sir John Hope knowing that Moore's object in fighting was to secure a safe embarkation decided to take advantage of Soult's temporary repulse to embark. So it was that at 9 o'clock at night the troops on the Monte Mero were withdrawn, leaving blazing watch-fires under charge of the piquets.

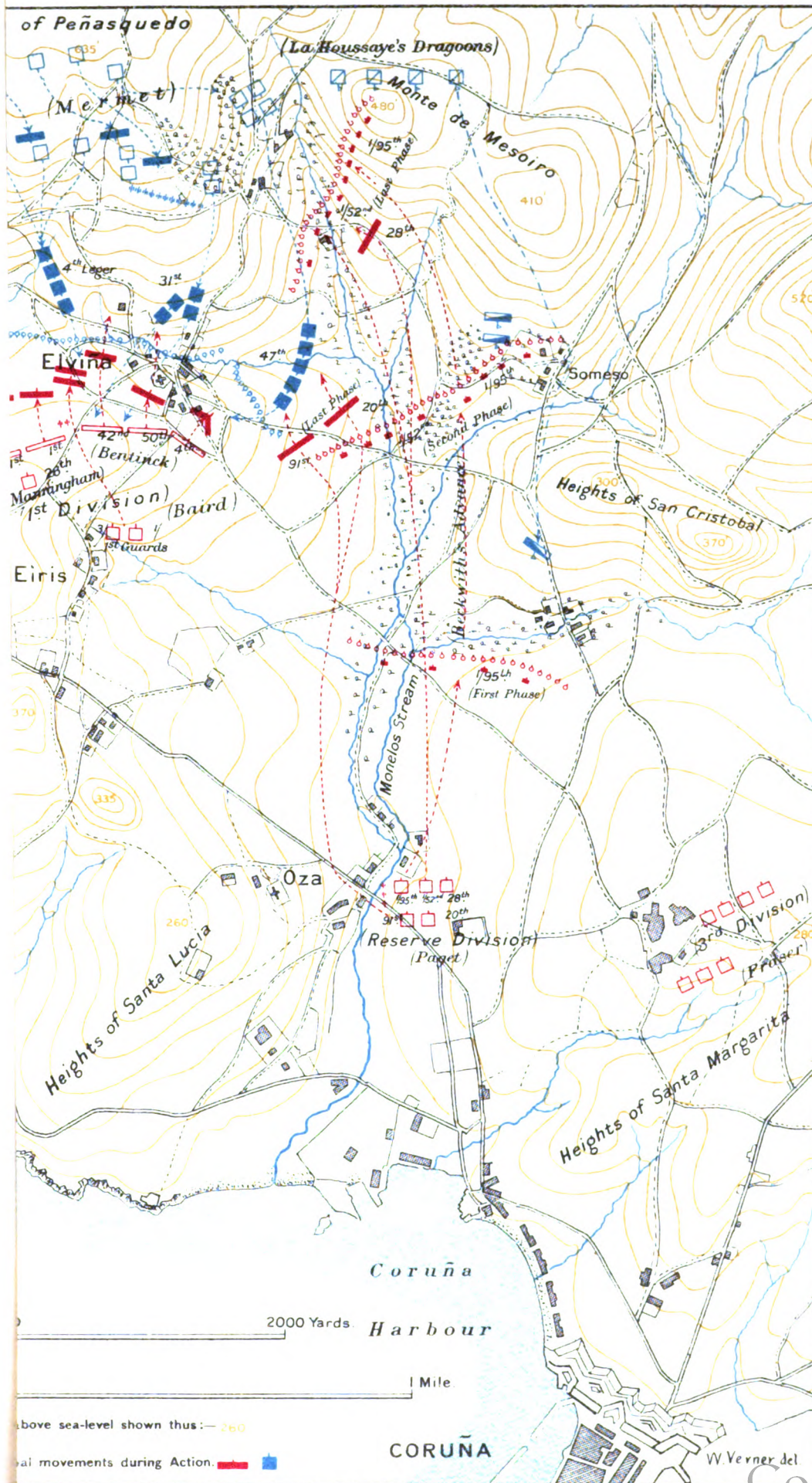
Sir John Moore was carried back into Coruña and died the same evening. To the end he evinced the same heroic unselfishness in his thoughts for others and for his men. He expressed his satisfaction that the French had been repulsed. "I hope my country will do me justice" were among his last words.

At midnight a grave was dug in one of the bastions and at 8 a.m. he was laid in it and his sorrowing comrades left him and continued with the arduous work of embarkation. This had been carried out in an orderly manner throughout the night. The Rifles formed the rear-guard and were the last troops to enter the gates of Coruña. At daybreak the piquets were withdrawn and the French pushed on to the

heights of Santa Lucia on the south side of the Bay and at about noon brought up six guns with which they fired on some of the outlying transports at anchor in the Bay. A few of the Merchant skippers cut their cables and stood out to sea. Four of these ships went ashore but three were got off and all the troops and crews brought off safely except 9 men of the Transport Service who were drowned. Beresford with his Brigade held the town until the morning of the 18th when he embarked his men and handed over the defence to the Spanish Garrison which shortly afterwards surrendered.

On the 18th the fleet of transports stood out to sea and ran before a heavy south-westerly gale, reaching our southern shores in four to five days. About the 22nd to 24th some 26,000 men were then landed, of whom over 3,000 were invalids. The sensation caused in England by the appearance of these war-worn men was profound. Then, as now, the people of England had no ideas of the trials and vicissitudes of a soldier's life in war and to a population accustomed only to see men parading in peace-time it seemed incredible that soldiers could be reduced to the deplorable condition many of the men were in, save by mismanagement. There were few who could realize what a three weeks' retreat in face of a determined foe, through mountains deep in snow and amid mud and slush, followed immediately by several days cooped up in a small sailing ship in a gale of wind, meant as regards the smartness and appearance of the men. Naturally enough, the popular view was that the leader must have been to blame somehow, and it is sad to have to record that many who knew better but who disliked Moore, encouraged this belief.

The losses in this memorable campaign, although most difficult to arrive at in the case of some of the corps have been worked out with extraordinary care by Mr. Oman. Although the data are at places insufficient to separate the losses in the retreat from the losses in the final battle, yet the total losses can be calculated with considerable accuracy.



At the start the grand total of Moore's army was almost exactly 35,000 men (34,982). Of this number 33,234 were present with him during the first part of October 1808. This was reduced to 29,357 by 19 December, present "with the colours," and with close on 4,000 sick.

The actual numbers which reached England in January were 26,199, showing a gross loss of 8,783 men. But from these have to be deducted 589 rank and file who escaped individually into Portugal and helped to form the two "Battalions of Detachments" which fought on the Douro and at Talavera later on in the year and which numbered in their ranks a proportion of our Riflemen. Also 296 men mostly of the 7th Hussars, who were shipwrecked and drowned during the return voyage to England and a number of sick, estimated by Mr. Oman as at least 1,500, who were sent back from Salamanca under escort. Lastly 400 British sick who had fallen into the hands of the French during the retreat were released by the Galician insurgents a few months after the battle.

We thus come to a total net loss of 5,998. Of this number the French returns show 2,189 as sent back to France as prisoners of war, leaving 3,809 officers and men who were slain during the retreat or in battle or who died on the road or in hospital. The actual loss of life therefore amounted to about 11 per cent. and the total casualties to about 17 per cent. of the gross total of Moore's force.

The exact British losses in the Battle of Coruña are not so easy to determine, Sir John Hope set them down as between 800 and 900 men. The heaviest losses were in Bentinck's and Coote Manningham's Brigades upon whom fell the brunt of the close fighting about Elvina. It is of very considerable interest to all Riflemen to note the remarkably small losses of the Regiments in Paget's Reserve Division taking into consideration the great importance of the services they rendered in defeating Soult's enveloping movement. Thus the 1st Battalion of the

95th had only 12 killed and 33 wounded, and the 1st Battalion of the 52nd had only 5 killed and 33 wounded, whilst the three Battalions in support suffered far less. This small number of casualties among our men was unquestionably due to the fighting formation employed, namely a line of skirmishers. The 1st Battalion went into action about 750 strong and since they are stated to have extended "so as to fill the gap of about half-a-mile," they probably were not closer together than 2 to 3 paces. Later, when the 52nd also about 760 strong came up to reinforce them they must have been able to bring the very maximum effect possible from their fire. Most probably, they never drew the French artillery fire owing to their shallow formation and the direction of their advance.

Of the French losses it is hard to give an accurate estimate. Reliable French accounts place them at not less than 800, Marshal Jourdan gives 1,000 but Mr. Oman gives good reasons for supposing that they greatly exceeded this number and indeed approached 1,500.¹

It only remains to record the movements of the 2nd Battalion after they reached Vigo. From Lieutenant Cox's diary it appears that Head-quarters embarked on 12 January on H.M.S. *Alfred*, a 74-gun ship, the remaining Companies being in the *Aid* transport and *George and Mary* brig. From the 12th to the 20th they remained at anchor waiting for orders—a delay which at any rate enabled all the stragglers along the line of retreat to get on board. On 21 January they sailed, but a gale springing up, they had to take shelter under the Bayona Islands and next day returned to the old anchorage. On 24th they again weighed and on the 26th lay to off Coruña, presumably to try to find out what had become of Moore and his Army.

Lieutenant Cox who was in the *George and Mary* Brig with his Company "unfortunately," as he grimly remarks, thus concludes his notes :—

¹ Oman, i., 894.

“ 28th, Made Scillies.

“ 29th, Furious storm, lost main-yard.

“ 30th, Renewed hurricane, ship disabled.

“ 1 February, Anchored Portsmouth, got news of the Battle of Coruña —had not heard anything since we parted from the 1st Battalion on 3 January (at Fuentebadon).”

It would be hard to give a more telling example of the extraordinary lack of any means of communication in the wild country along the sea-board of Galicia only a century ago. From Vigo to Coruña is only about 85 miles, yet Craufurd at Vigo on 24th had no tidings of the Battle fought at Coruña on the 16th, over a week earlier or of the homeward sailing of the British Fleet of transports on 18th. It is very certain that, when the *Alfred* was lying to off Coruña on the 26th, looking vainly for any sight of Moore's fleet of transports, the majority of the ships composing it had already been in English ports for some days.

It but remains to deal with the losses incurred by the Rifle Regiment in this campaign. In the 1st Battalion there were altogether about 180 casualties. Subsequent to the fight at Cacabelos, 2 men were killed and 1 Sergeant, 1 Bugler and 13 men died from wounds, sickness and exhaustion, whilst 31 men, wounded or exhausted, fell into the enemy's hands. In the final fight before Coruña, Lieutenant Charles Noble was killed and Assistant-Surgeon W. P. Turner severely wounded, 1 Sergeant and 10 men were killed, and 8 men were taken prisoners. The total losses of the 1st Battalion in twenty days, including the fight at Cacabelos, was 2 Officers, 8 Sergeants, 2 Buglers and 133 Riflemen dead or prisoners of war. These numbers do not include the wounded who were brought back to England,¹ namely, Lieutenant Eccles, 1 Sergeant and 33 men.

Of the losses in the 2nd Battalion, I have been unable to obtain

¹ Cope, 39, and Pay-lists December 1808—January 1809.

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any precise details. 2 Sergeants and 7 men died from wounds or exhaustion, and 44 men are shown as "missing," an ominous entry when the nature of the fighting in which they were engaged is considered. Of those who were left behind wounded or were taken prisoners of war, many eventually escaped from the French and made their way to Portugal.

After a campaign of the severity of Coruña many officers and men in addition to those who die from the effects of wounds must in the nature of things succumb to fatal illnesses or disease. It is of course impossible to make the roughest estimate of the number of such sufferers, although the Company Pay-lists now and again bear grim evidence of the ravages of war by the curt entry "non-effective through death." Thus Surgeon Turner, 1 Sergeant and 31 men are shown as "died of wounds" or simply "died" between 18 January, the date the 1st Battalion left Coruña, and 18 February. The total casualties, therefore, for the Regiment amounted to 4 Officers, 12 Sergeants, 4 Buglers and about 250 Private Riflemen.

But there was one Rifleman who succumbed to the hardships of the campaign whose name will ever be green in the memory of all who serve in the Rifle Brigade. This was none less than their Founder, Major-General Coote Manningham. It is a curious satire on human reputation that only of late years this admirable officer should have been singled out as a sample of the men of the 18th century who preferred a courtier's life to that of a soldier.¹ No greater mistake ever was penned. From his earliest youth Coote Manningham was a keen soldier as his record of service will show. Born in 1766 he obtained a commission in the 39th Regiment in 1782 and served with it in the great Siege of Gibraltar. He became a Captain in 1785, and Major in the 45th Regiment in 1791 and was appointed to one of the Light Infantry Battalions formed under Sir George Grey in the West Indies.

¹ "Sir Charles Napier," by Sir W. F. Butler, 16.

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With this Corps he took part in the reduction of Martinique, S. Lucia and Guadeloupe. In 1795 he became Lieutenant-Colonel of the 4th Regiment, and served as Adjutant-General in the attack on San Domingo. Here he was severely wounded. On his return to England in 1798, he was promoted Colonel and appointed an A.D.C. to King George IV., and later on was made an Equerry to His Majesty.

It was about this time (1799) as we have seen that he in conjunction with Colonel Stewart wrote the famous memorandum which resulted in the raising of the Rifle Corps in the following year. He was promoted Major-General in 1805 and was employed on the Staff at home until he was given command of the Brigade under Moore in 1808 with which he fought so stubbornly on 16 January 1809 at Coruna. The fatigues and sufferings he had undergone acting on a constitution impaired by service and by wounds in the West Indies, brought on an illness from which he never rallied. He died at Maidstone on 26 August 1809, and lies buried at Little Bookham in Surrey. A brass tablet to his memory was placed in Westminster Abbey by his friend Lieut.-General Sir Thomas Hislop in 1813, which records that "He was the model of a British soldier." This memorial is in the West Aisle, rather high up.¹

So long as the Rifle Brigade endures, Coote Manningham's name will be handed down to successive generations owing to the words of the famous old Regimental song which, as I have been assured by old Riflemen who have long since answered the last roll-call, was a favourite amongst our men at the time of Waterloo.

Colonel Coote Manningham he was the man
For he invented a capital plan
He raised The Corps of Rifle Men
To fight for England's Glory.

¹ Cope, 39-41, "Rifle Brigade Chronicle," 1911, 130.



